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REASON

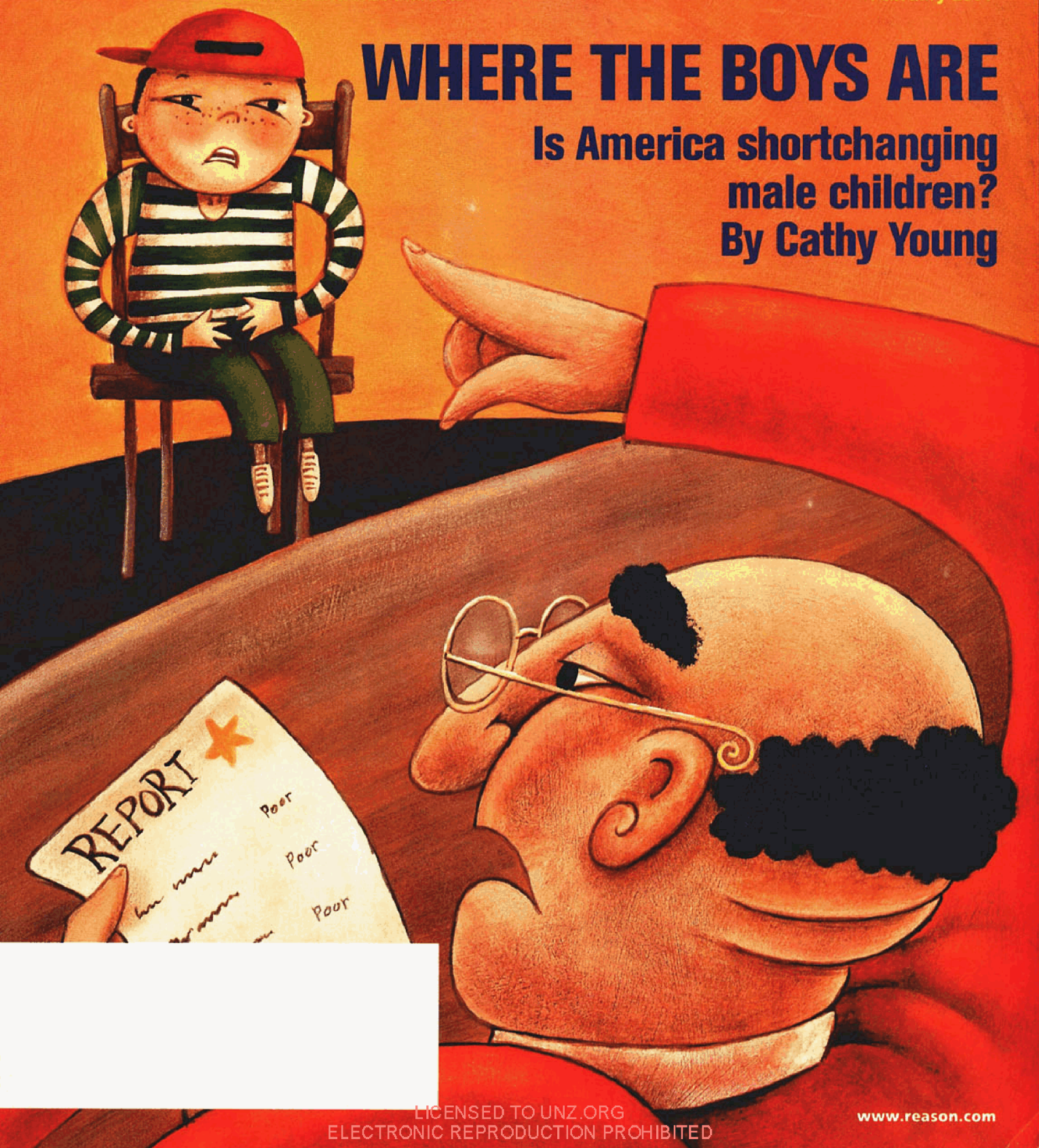
Free Minds and Free Markets

February 2001

WHERE THE BOYS ARE

Is America shortchanging male children?

By Cathy Young



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Bill Clinton's Exit Interviews

The outgoing president enters his final spin cycle.

By Nick Gillespie

One of the great, though largely unacknowledged, benefits of Campaign 2000's bizarre, attenuated endgame is that it has soaked up time that would have otherwise been given over to media summations of Bill Clinton's presidential legacy.

Given an ordinary election, the weeks between November 7 and the inauguration would have been filled with mostly nostalgic appraisals of the Man from Hope's tenure as the nation's chief executive. (It is one of the sad truths of American journalism that the press almost inevitably goes soft whenever a major figure, however controversial or reviled, exits the public stage or dies; indeed, we can only await the reverential encomia that Sens. Strom Thurmond and Jesse Helms will receive when they finally shuffle off their mortal coils.) Instead, we have had mostly silence on the topic.

Whether the contested election has cancelled or merely pushed this discussion back a few months remains to be seen, but at least one partisan has been doing his best to make sure that the Clinton legacy is understood in its fullest, most nuanced glory. That person is, unsurprisingly, none other than Bill Clinton himself. His early efforts leave something to be desired, especially when it comes to the public humility, however self-evidently phony, that Americans esteem in their leaders. For instance, we've learned recently that Clinton only grudgingly accepted a constitutionally mandated retirement, musing that "maybe they should limit it to two 'consecutive' terms" and that he thinks he would have easily won a third White House race given the opportunity and the current competition. Such braggadocio, even when it's accurate, is not exactly the quickest way to win hearts and minds.

Clinton, a master tactician, realizes that burnishing his reputation will require the sort of permanent campaign he brought to his eight years in the Oval Office. (Luckily for him, as the empty-nest spouse of a freshman senator he'll have plenty of time on his hands. Then again, given the diversions he pursued even while maintaining a full schedule as president, idle hours may be his most serious challenge yet.)

Such understanding may explain his renewed public affection for the sage of San Clemente, Richard Nixon, who Clinton says once counseled him that "a lot of life is just hanging on." Notes Clinton of the man who conducted secret wars and cover-ups, "He...lived what I thought was a fundamentally constructive life....I thought he paid a high price for what he did."

In two recent, high-profile interviews, one in *Esquire* and one in *Rolling Stone*, the outgoing president has outlined the general strategy for his final spin cycle. Characteristically, he seems to be relying on equal measures of self-pity and mendacity to secure his place in history. There's no question that Clinton has a number of achievements worth crowing about—he was that rare bird, a candidate elected to two full terms, and he presided over a meaningful reform of welfare policy and a balanced budget. Federal spending in 1999 was 18.7 percent of gross domestic product, the lowest it had been since 1974. (The flip side is that 1999 revenues came in at 20 percent of GDP, the highest peacetime level ever.) However, he seems more interested in taking credit for a largely undocumented sea change in American attitudes toward government.

This comes through in the *Esquire* interview, which was conducted in late August and appeared just days before the November election (it's available online at esquire.com/features/articles/001026_mfr_clinton_1.html). At the time of its release, the interview drew attention less for its content and more for the provocative magazine cover that announced it: Clinton sits splay-legged on a stool, hands on knees, smiling for the adoring camera as if it were Monica Lewinsky carrying a pizza and a tin of Altoids.

But the interview is memorable too, if only for its subject's audacity. "I entered the environment which was unprecedented, where the other party decided that from the moment I took my hand off the Bible, taking the oath of office, they would try to delegitimize me," he says, casting his White House years as a triumphant tale of David vs. Goliath (that the Republicans were in the minority in both houses of Congress in 1993 complicates this more than a little). "I think the connection between what we do in Washington and to how people live is closer than it has ever been because of the way we conducted the business of government," says Clinton, who adds that his administration cut "through a lot of the meanness and antipathy toward the government per se that existed....It's much harder to, at least overtly, practice the politics of division than it was. The president is supposed to be a unifying force, not just in rhetoric but in fact."

These are, to put it mildly, curious claims for perhaps the most divisive politician in recent decades, one whose basic response to any and all perceived adversaries was to attack their moral standing and integrity (just ask Billy Dale, the slandered former head of the White House Travel Office). It's not clear what Clinton is talking about when he calls himself a unifier, given that he failed to win a majority of votes in either of his elections. And, according to the Gallup Poll, the percentage of Americans with "a great deal" and "quite a lot" of confidence in the presidency has not increased during the Clinton years. In March 1993, the figure stood at 43 percent; in June 2000, the most recent date for which Gallup reports, it stood at 42 percent. Over the same time frame, Congress has consistently garnered ratings in the 20s on the same measure. So much for renewing faith in government.

More to the point, such claims obscure one of Clinton's great signature flourishes, which is to undercut his own authority and administration policies depending on the situation and the audience. Clinton is in fine form on this score in the *Rolling Stone* interview, which was conducted shortly before the election and which appears in the Dec. 28, 2000–Jan. 4, 2001 issue. When asked whether he considered his acquittal in the Senate trial a sign that Americans had grown more comfortable with liberal sexual mores, Clinton responds, "Not really. People strongly disagreed with what I did. I did, too."

The president similarly disowns his "don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding gays in the military as a plot foisted on him by crafty Republicans, especially then–Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole. Forget that Clinton had campaigned on the eminently defensible idea that gays should be allowed to serve openly in the armed forces and had pledged to issue an executive order allowing it. Here, he casts his own policy, which he once touted as an "honorable compromise" and a sign of his progressive bona fides, as a nefarious plot designed to create a "controversy that would consume the early days of [his] presidency."

Precisely why Clinton never revisited the issue during his tenure is left unexplained, as is his seemingly inconsistent stance on gay marriage. (He's against it, even as he asserts, correctly, that gays should have equal rights.) We are left with a man seemingly as dumbfounded by his own administration's policy as we are.

Then there are these tidbits about marijuana: "I think that most small amounts of marijuana have been de-criminalized in most places and should be. I think that what we really need—one of the things that I ran out of time before I could do [it] is a re-examination of our entire policy on imprisonment."

Such eminently sensible attitudes are close to earthshaking: a president of the United States openly endorsing the decriminalization of pot and a fundamental restructuring of criminal penalties for drug offenses! We're only left to wonder where Clinton was during the past eight years, as state and federal marijuana arrests continued to climb, as did the number of prisoners doing time for nonviolent drug offenses. Or where the president might have been in 1996, when both Attorney General Janet Reno and drug czar Barry McCaffrey threatened doctors in Arizona and California with license removal and jail if they dared prescribe medical marijuana in accordance with new state laws there. Could this be the same guy who canned Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders in part because she dared suggest that drug legalization was worth studying?

Examples of this sort, in which Clinton responds to his own actions and policies as a puzzled outsider, can be multiplied endlessly. For instance, in the *Rolling Stone* interview, he implies that it was the Republican Congress that insisted on only "narrowing," rather than eliminating, "unconscionable" disparities between crack and powdered cocaine. In fact, the administration sought the same goal, even proposing to lower the amount of powdered coke necessary to trigger a five-year mandatory minimum sentence.

Let one more instance stand in for the rest: In September, the president expressed shock and disappointment at the way the government denied Los Alamos' Wen Ho Lee due process during the scientist's nine months of solitary confinement. "[The case] should be disturbing to the American people," Clinton told reporters after Lee was released. "We ought not to keep people in jail without bail unless there's some real profound reason."

Indeed, what should be especially disturbing is a chief executive who admitted that he "always had reservations" about denying Lee bail but did nothing about the way his Justice Department pursued the case. More disturbing still: Three weeks after the president made his comments, he headlined a fundraiser in New Mexico for congressional hopeful John Kelly, the lead prosecutor in the Lee case.

This willingness to separate himself from his own administration may in the end be Clinton's truly novel contribution to presidential politics; if this gesture does not exactly originate with Clinton, he is surely its master practitioner. (In the end, even Nixon, in his own fashion, copped to what his plumbers had been up to.) It is a powerful way of both taking and dodging responsibility for any given action or policy. It simultaneously blunts criticism and presumes assent. It casts manifest failings in political nerve as occasions for sympathy. It is, in short, a brilliant Machiavellian ploy.

The willingness to separate himself from his own administration may in the end be Clinton's truly novel contribution to presidential politics.

"Whether I changed the presidency depends upon how other people conduct it," Clinton muses in his *Esquire* interview. Here's hoping that this is one change the next president shuns.

Nick Gillespie (gillespie@reason.com) is editor-in-chief of REASON.

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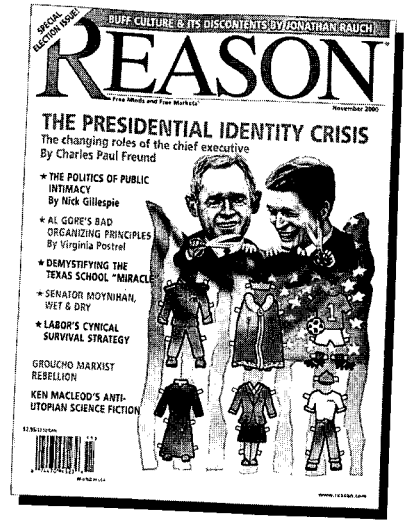
SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE
BUFF CULTURE & ITS DISCONTENTS BY JONATHAN RAUCH
REASON
Free Minds and Free Markets
November 2000
THE PRESIDENTIAL IDENTITY CRISIS
The changing roles of the chief executive
By Charles Paul Freund
★ THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC INTIMACY
By Nick Gillespie
★ AL GORE'S BAD ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES
By Virginia Postrel
★ DEMYSTIFYING THE TEXAS SCHOOL "MIRACLE"
★ SENATOR MOYNIHAN, WET & DRY
★ LABOR'S CYNICAL SURVIVAL STRATEGY
GROUCHO MARXIST REBELLION
KEN MACLEOD'S ANTI-UTOPIAN SCIENCE FICTION

Labor Lost

I enjoyed Michael McMenamin's "Labor Lost" (November), but I would be interested in further information on the tactics unions are using to gain members where they cannot win elections.

For example, in Milwaukee the group "Justice for Janitors" has given up trying to organize mostly part-time and low-wage janitorial employees and is instead trying to force building owners and managers to hire only union firms to do their cleaning. The activists chant and shout and rattle soda cans filled with stones at board meetings, award ceremonies, and other public events where targeted high-profile building owners or CEOs who use nonunion cleaners are appearing. They don't attempt to organize the workers, they just drive clients away from the nonunion companies through intimidation.

Apparently, if you're not working for a unionized firm, you don't deserve a job. What tactics are they resorting to in other cities?

Mary Jo Baas
Madison, WI

It is true that union membership is proportionally much greater in the public sector. But unions have secured the dues of civil servants through a Faustian bargain whereby they forgo their most potent weapon, the right to strike. A government bus line, for example, does not have to worry, like its private counterpart, about a possible walkout.

Government unions may pretend to be militant, but in fact they support the politicians who impose the legal prohibitions against strikes by public employees. In return, the politicians acquiesce to union demands for a union shop and the dues checkoff. It's a cozy arrangement unless you happen to be the employee.

David Kahn
Montville, NJ

I enjoyed "Labor Lost," though I would hasten to add that Mr. McMenamin's point of disagreement with my own analysis is based on a truncated summary of my argument in *Labor Pains.*

I argued there that three sets of considerations—the size of the stakes (the factor Mr. McMenamin discusses), the degree and nature of the unions' motivation, and the inherent magnetism of the opportunities for attack—drove the action. Indeed, in my view, it is the last of these points that is determinative in health care—the availability of dramatic and potent themes.

Jarol B. Manheim
Bethesda, MD

Michael McMenamin replies: In response to Ms. Baas, the Service Employees International Union is leading the way with comprehensive corporate campaigns against certain employers and, in some cases, certain industries. Some of the SEIU's tactics are: storming the offices of the employer and sticking bumper

REASON NEWS

■ We are pleased to announce that Lynn Scarlett has been named president of Reason Foundation, the nonprofit publisher of REASON. Scarlett succeeds Robert W. Poole Jr., who has been named founder of Reason Foundation.

■ This issue marks the debut of a monthly column by Contributing Editor Cathy Young. See page 17 for her first offering.

stickers and flyers everywhere, demonstrating at the homes of company board members, blocking access to major roads, and handing out leaflets designed to scare customers away from the employer.

The SEIU's phone book–sized *Contract Campaign Manual* admits that the purpose of these tactics is to "jeopardize relationships between the employer and lenders, investors, stockholders, customers, clients, patients, tenants, politicians, or others on whom the employer depends for funds" and "embarrass [company management] in front of their superiors, associates, families, neighbors, or friends in the community." And the SEIU is good at what it does.

Contrary to Mr. Kahn, most public employees are not prohibited by law from striking. In Ohio, for example, teachers are free to strike, but police and firefighters are not. And as the federal air traffic controllers learned the hard way in 1980, they are not permitted to strike either. But those are exceptions. All unions contractually agree not to strike during the term of a labor agreement, and dues checkoffs can be made only pursuant to the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. Once an agreement expires, continuing a dues checkoff would be illegal.

Finally, Professor Manheim and I don't really disagree, but let me elaborate. I agree with him that high turnover in a company's work force can become, in many circumstances, a barrier to entry because, as he suggests, the workers to be organized are "something of a moving target." But I would argue this is more true of the older industrial unions that patiently worked to organize a company over an extended period. New Labor is much less patient, and, as the SEIU's *Contract Campaign Manual* admits, the SEIU seeks to "organize the employer," not the employee. Hence, the tactics outlined above are directed at the employer, not the employee. For New Labor, therefore, high turnover is not the barrier to organizing that it once was for Old Labor. Professor Manheim does argue that there are three sets of considerations driving the union's actions, but I believe his third consideration ("the availability of dramatic and potent themes") is a tactical point, not a strategic one. The main issue is still the money. If there's enough of it to be made, the unions will invent the dramatic and potent themes.

The Real Miracle in Texas

With the arrival of November's issue, I turned straight to "Texas' Big Test" by Jerry Jesness. The subject has been foremost in my political notebook since I first hired two Vocational Education Office girls in 1974, just 10 years after I graduated from a public Texas high school. I was dismayed to find that neither of these well-behaved high school seniors could even spell.

I appreciate Jesness' article. But he fails to point out the miracle in Houston's worst ghetto areas: Thaddeus Lott and the new charter schools. With nothing but opposition from the teachers union, the educrats, and all who support the status quo, Lott has risen above it all to create a system that now has teachers as well as students waiting in line to get in. Scores are consistently equal to or better than those of the richest districts in Houston, in all areas of study. (That might not be saying much, depending on where you place the bar, but at least they do that well.)

Jesness' article makes the case for more charter schools and for free choice and vouchers. The continued failure of the very schools he discusses—after all we've done to turn them around—is clear evidence that some schools will *never* turn around, no matter how hard you try, how much you test, how vigorously you pressure the establishment. I believe every child in Texas deserves a K–12 education at least equal to what San Antonio's illustrious Mayor Henry Cisneros had, and that was all private, all Catholic. Why not? It works.

Robert Bruce
Boerne, TX

Jerry Jesness replies: I agree with most everything in Robert Bruce's letter. Although I hope to have the opportunity someday to visit Thaddeus Lott's Wesley Elementary, I have no firsthand knowledge of his charter schools. Sources that I trust, however, speak well of them, so I am assuming that these schools represent one of too few bright spots in the Texas education system.

The two current trends in education reform are government-mandated standards, which are monitored with tests like the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, and market-oriented reforms such as vouchers and charter schools. Although we should not unconditionally support the latter reforms—any program can be badly implemented, and a badly implemented voucher program could damage public and private schools alike—the Texas experience has shown us a serious weakness of the former. Schools and government agencies can succumb to the temptation to spin data in order to exaggerate their successes and mask their failures.

Practicing Privilege

I found the article "Attorney Privilege" by James Joseph (November) to be, as a lawyer might put it, "on point." In starting my own new business, I have been bewildered by the array of accounting, legal, banking, and financial services firms I must deal with—separately. The only thing that has kept me sane is the fact that I am fortunate to have family business connections with firms in all these fields (including many of the firms Mr. Joseph mentions) and so have been able to put together a coherent team of advisers. I cannot imagine what the typical first-time entrepreneur without access to such services must go through in order to do the same.

Michael David Wolk
Boston, MA

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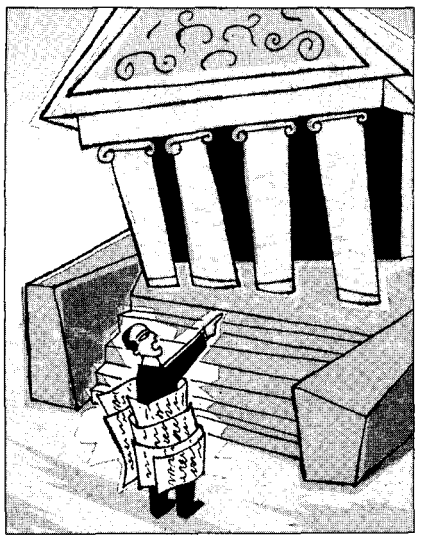
Citings

Beating City Hall

By Bill Steigerwald

Who says you can't fight City Hall and win? A horrible urban renewal project planned for the heart of downtown Pittsburgh has been stopped in its tracks.



In late November, after two years of political turmoil, merchant apprehension, and public outcry, Mayor Tom Murphy gave up on his $525 million scheme to remake a thriving though downscale shopping district (see "Death by Wrecking Ball," June 2000). Dubbed Market Place at Fifth & Forbes, the plan would have used eminent domain to flatten two dowdy but busy shopping streets and replace them with a mix of high-end retailers, restaurants, and movie theaters aimed at attracting suburbanites.

Mayor Murphy, who just happens to be running for reelection this year, got an excuse to drop the project when the management of Nordstrom, the key anchor to the project, decided not to commit to putting a store in Pittsburgh now or anytime soon (despite a $28 million gift from the city just to show up).

In other words, the little guys—125 formerly doomed merchants of gold, candy, wigs, and cheap dresses, and their predominantly low-income customers—won. Who lost? The mayor's development pals and the corporate city fathers, including their editorial cheerleaders in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.*

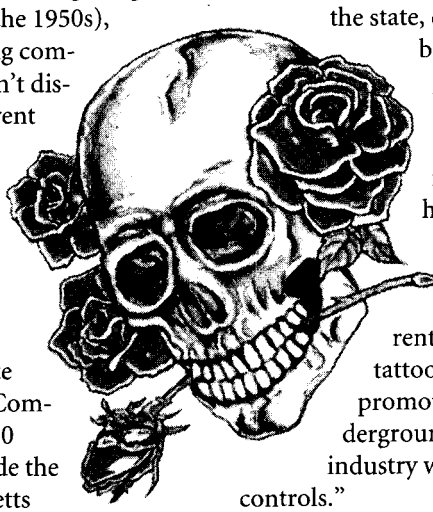
Now Murphy, who is not as humble or as contrite as he ought to be, has been meeting with the resistance fighters to do what he should have done at the outset: figure out a more sensible, less grandiose way to revitalize the city's Fifth & Forbes corridor without bulldozing the freedoms and property rights of those who are already there. That effort may or may not succeed. But it's bound to be better than what Murphy tried to ram down the neighborhood's throat.

Body Art

By Sara Rimensnyder

In late October, a Massachusetts Superior Court judge ended the state's 38-year-old ban on tattooing, saying the law restricted free speech. Artists, many of whom campaigned for the repeal, now have state sanction to grace clients' skin with flaming phoenixes, jeering skulls, or anything else. But there's a paradox in this victory: Legalization may mean less freedom, not more.

When the state banned the industry (following a hepatitis scare in the 1950s), the tattooing community didn't disappear. It went underground. According to shop owner and artist Keith Marchand, whose Acute Body Arts Company sits 150 yards outside the Massachusetts border, many of the country's most famous inkers have continued working in the state, despite the ban. As Judge Barbara Rouse noted in her decision, "The current ban on tattooing has promoted an underground tattoo industry with no controls."



Though tattooing was ille-

Balance Sheet

By Jeff A. Taylor

ASSETS

▲ **Blocks Tackled.** The Supreme Court bars police roadblocks set up to snag the odd motorist that might, kinda, maybe have drugs. Seems somebody fought a war over this once.

▲ **Temp Tempest.** The UN climate conference at The Hague blows up when Europe rejects sweeping U.S. concessions as insufficient to stop the certain looming catastrophe. The E.U. will have to go it alone with high energy taxes and economic gridlock.

▲ **Secret Sharers.** A New Jersey court rules that the anonymity of two Web posters is protected. The judge says the software company that didn't like their messages never proved they made defamatory statements or did anything unlawful.

▲ **Mr. Greenbyte.** U.S. growers adopt "precision farming," using computers to track production in their fields right down to the row. Seed and fertilizer can be better applied, with less waste and runoff.

▲ **Ozone Whole.** The hole in the ozone layer at the South Pole will start shrinking within a decade and should close completely in the next 50 years, scientists say. The Stratospheric Processes and their Role in Climate Panel says volcanic eruptions could slow the change, but it is definitely closing.

▲ **Personal Crunch.** General Mills announces a plan to make Web-customized cereals. Mycereal.com will allow over 1 million combinations and ship the concoctions to your door in a couple of days.

▼ **Charlotte's Web.** A federal appeals court votes 2–1 to overturn a lower court's decision that found the public schools in Charlotte, N.C., were desegregated after 28 years of busing. Another 25 years of 50-minute bus rides should even things out.

▼ **Gallic Gall.** Yahoo! lands on the wrong side of a French court decision requiring the global Web portal to block French surfers' access to Nazi auctions (see "No Liberté Online," Citings, October). Next up, making the Web comport with China's view of content?

▼ **Dorm Dodge.** Colleges and universities give students a lesson in phone-charge robbery. Student bodies are hit with high mark-ups for phone services. UC-Berkeley, for one, hikes overseas calls over 200 percent.

▼ **Cloak and Stagger.** The CIA fires four employees and suspends at least 10 others over a "secret" chat room within the agency's computer network. Chiefly used for "bitching about management," it went undetected for years.

▼ **Mourning After.** The city of Los Angeles spent about $36 million to put on the Democratic National Convention in August, four times more than expected. Twenty-two million dollars went to security, $4.1 million for shuttle buses, and $4.2 million for logistical support.

▼ **Snuffed Outside.** Friendship Heights, Maryland, moves to become the first jurisdiction in the country to ban smoking on public property. Outside. In parks and on sidewalks. In the fresh air.

LIABILITIES

gal, artists had little to fear from state authorities. Satisfied customers weren't likely to turn them in, and police—as Marchand and others confirm—were more inclined to join their clientele than to bust them. There were no inspections, no regulations, and no taxes.

Still, most tattooists fought hard for legalization and the security it brings. Marchand, who lives in Massachusetts, has been driving an hour-long commute into Connecticut so that he can operate an above-board business. He says he hasn't heard of any health disasters resulting from the thriving underground, but he's all for law and order: "It's like a mini-combat zone....It's definitely got to be regulated."

Just Compensation

By Brian Doherty

In November, Oregon, notorious for its expansive land use regulations, passed a constitutional amendment that just might rein them in. The new law will help citizens get compensation from the state government if its regulations lessen the value of their property.

Measure 7 passed with 54 percent of the vote, despite strong opposition from the governor, most other state officials, environmentalist groups, and some business interests. Opponents warned that compensation under the measure would total $5.4 billion a year—effectively admitting that they intend to impose that much cost on property owners without compensation. David Hunnicutt of Oregonians in Action, a landowners' rights group that helped get the measure

on the ballot, says the victory was unexpectedly large, given that Measure 7's opponents outspent proponents by a 5-to-1 margin.

The new law applies only to regulations that went into effect after the current owner bought the property. Unlike many state-level laws that ask government to "consider" property values in its regulations, Measure 7 "provides teeth and ties takings compensation to going beyond what common law would provide," says Steven Eagle, professor of law at George Mason University and author of *Property Rights and Regulatory Takings*. "I think that's extremely significant."

The new rule already seems to be making a difference. Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development was set to issue new rules about expanding ▶

SOURCES

Where can you find new or unusual music? Surprisingly, **the answer may be TV commercials**, as advertisers use songs from such obscure but brilliant performers as Nick Drake and Jorge Ben to sell their wares. While the spots don't identify the music they're playing, a Web site does: **www.adcritic.com/music**, which lists dozens of commercials, the music you hear on them, and the musicians who perform it. The rest of the AdCritic site can be fun as well. "Here," the FAQ explains, "is where you will find practically any ad you have seen on TV. At least that is the goal. And soon you will be able to tell the world what you thought of the ad. You can vote on it, comment on it, discuss the underlying innuendos, and hopefully even get your comments read by some of the leading advertising agencies in the world."

QUOTE

"I'm a liberal Democrat. I started in Florida politics. I worked for George McGovern. I worked for Jimmy Carter. I've worked for Ted Kennedy, Mario Cuomo. Nobody can question, I think, my credentials and my convictions. But I have to tell you, at this point it's hard to believe that my party, **the party that [my family has] belonged to since my great, great grandfather**...has become no longer a party of principles, but **has been hijacked by a confederacy of gangsters** who need to take power by whatever means and whatever canards they can say."

—Pat Caddell, MSNBC's *Hardball*, November 27

BRICKBATS

◆ "Your vehicle was seen traveling on southbound I-95 near I-195 on Wednesday, September 27. Please provide the following information: Where were you going? Who was with you? What was the purpose of your trip?" Maryland's Mass Transit Administration had videotaped some 48,000 motorists, gotten their addresses from state records, and sent them letters like that one. The agency says it was trying to identify traffic patterns between Baltimore and Washington, in hopes of persuading the federal government to fund a high-speed rail service in the area.

◆ In Thousand Oaks, California, the fire protection district cut down the weeds on a vacant lot owned by Jim Shaddix and sent him a bill for $1,173.10. The district says that's only fair, since Shaddix ignored three notices that the weeds were a fire hazard. But Shaddix has an excuse: He never received the notices, because they were sent to the lot's former owner. The county assessor says Shaddix is telling the truth; and in fact, it takes at least five months for the county to register title changes. Nonetheless, the Board of Supervisors ruled that Shaddix must pay the bill.

◆ In Camarillo, California, Michael Nelson got hit with a $271 ticket for littering. His crime? He was spotted by a California Highway Patrol officer spitting sunflower seeds out of his window while driving down U.S. Highway 101.

the state's urban growth boundary, which restricts development outside of designated areas. Any new such rules are now on hold, pending a full legal understanding of Measure 7 and its ramifications.

War Protests

By Jacob Sullum

The meaning of last fall's ridiculously close presidential contest may be hard to divine, but voters did send one pretty clear message on Election Day: The war on drugs has gone too far. Six state and four local ballot initiatives dealt with the issue, and most of the results suggested strong misgivings about current policy.

California's Proposition 36, the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act, passed with 61 percent of the vote. The law, similar to an Arizona initiative approved in 1996, prescribes treatment instead of jail for nonviolent drug offenders on their first and second convictions. The state Legislative Analyst's Office estimates that the new policy will reduce California's prison population by up to 36,000 inmates a year, with annual savings of nearly $300 million.

By votes of 65 percent and 54 percent, respectively, Nevada and Colorado approved initiatives permitting the medical use of marijuana, raising to nine the number of states with such laws. Because its initiative was a constitutional amendment, Nevada's vote was its second on the issue; 59 percent of voters had approved medical marijuana in 1998.

In Mendocino County, California, 58 percent of voters approved an initiative

that allows residents to grow up to 25 marijuana plants for personal use and instructs local authorities to make pot a low enforcement priority. About two-thirds of voters in each of three Massachusetts districts said yes to initiatives that ask their state legislators to support marijuana decriminalization. In Alaska, on the other hand, an initiative aimed at legalizing marijuana failed by a 20-point margin.

Asset forfeiture reform passed in Oregon with 67 percent of the vote and in Utah with 69 percent. Both measures require the government to obtain a criminal conviction before seizing property and to direct forfeiture revenue to programs other than law enforcement (drug treatment in Oregon, schools in Utah). A Massachusetts initiative that included similar reforms, along with the elimination of jail terms for most nonviolent drug offenders, was de-

☛ "Perhaps it has taken the veiled threats of Spiro Agnew and Martha Mitchell to awaken newsmen to the dangers of government regulation, but whatever it is, [Walter] Cronkite is wide awake....Noting the trend toward fewer and fewer newspapers, Cronkite stated that broadcast media can provide a check on printed media 'if we are left free to perform that essential journalistic function. The trouble is that we are not free, we are government-licensed.'"

—Robert Poole Jr., "Cronkite's Crisis"

☛ "If the purpose of the anti-trust laws was to smash big business, then why has the American economy become much more centralized since their passage?"

—Roy Childs Jr., "Big Business and the Rise of American Statism"

☛ "I have been released from military servitude nine months early due to my insistence on being dealt with by a moral standard which recognizes my human rights and due to my 'unacceptable' attitudes and actions resulting from my firmly held moral convictions....Your publication aided my victory; it gave me some of the weaponry I had to fight my 'first' major battle. The fact that I chose to fight that battle is your payment."

—Letters

feated, attracting only 47 percent of the vote.

TUFLUC

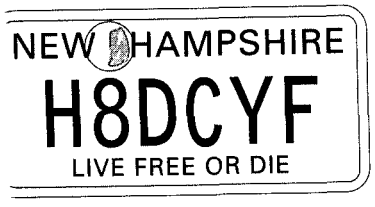
By Sara Rimensnyder

We might be annoyed by the weaving sports car whose plates announce that it's "2FAST4U," or amused by the Sammy Hagar fan who has kept on rockin' with "OU812." But it's hard to take vanity plates seriously.

It's also hard to take seriously the New Hampshire citizen who complained that a fellow driver's plate was a government-sanctioned hate message. But the authorities listened, and they ultimately seized the plate in November.

The offending message, "H8DCYF," expressed driver Paula Werne's views of the state Division for Children, Youth, and Families. As a civil rights lawyer, Werne regularly faces off with the agency's officials in court. Writing in response to the letter that recalled her plates, she argued that the message "perfectly expresses my sentiments toward the Division... who violate my clients' rights on a daily basis."

New Hampshire law grants the director of the Department of Motor Vehicles the authority to issue vanity plates "under such rules as he shall deem appropriate."



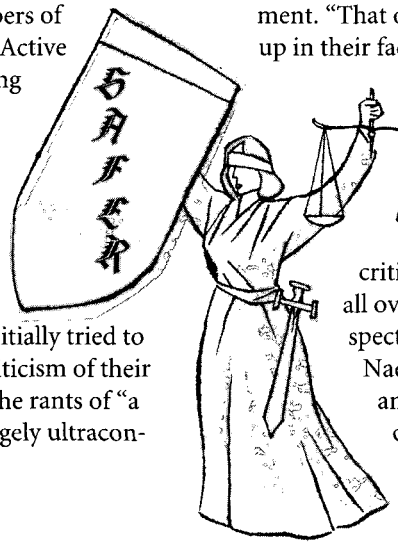
The Sex Exception

By Sara Rimensnyder

Last fall, Columbia University established a new system of hearings for cases of sexual misconduct. The upshot of the changes is the abolition of due process.

To make the hearings "less adversarial" than a courtroom proceeding, the accused doesn't have the opportunity to confront his accuser; nor may he hear his accuser's witnesses and cross-examine them. The accused can't have an attorney present at the hearing, and he has to keep details of the proceedings confidential. And while the code is vague on the question, he may even bear the burden of proof.

Members of Students Active For Ending Rape (SAFER), which took the lead in drafting the new policy, initially tried to depict criticism of their work as the rants of "a small, largely ultraconservative minority," as they wrote in an October 4 statement. "That one really blew up in their face," says Columbia student Karl Ward, who opposes the policy. In fact, criticism is flowing all over the political spectrum. Ward is a Nader supporter and outspoken critic of the ▶



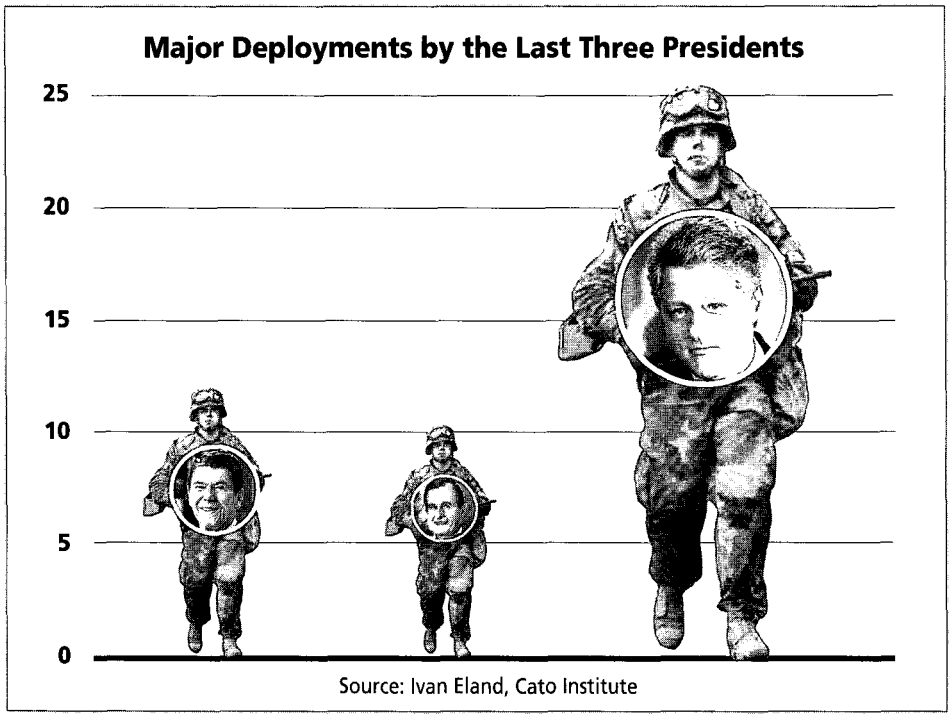
DATA

Mad Bomber in Chief

By Michael W. Lynch

Contrary to what you heard in Campaign 2000, the U.S. military is not experiencing a readiness crisis. It's experiencing a *deployment* crisis, says Ivan Eland, director of defense studies at the Cato Institute and author of a recent study, "A Hollow Debate on Military Readiness."

Eland argues that the "bone-crushing dominance" of the U.S. military won't soon be rivaled. In 1999 we spent $270 billion on our armed forces—more than the next seven biggest-spending countries combined. The real problem faced by our soldiers, says Eland, comes from serving under a government that deploys the military for everything from nation-building in Somalia to bombing a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. By Eland's count, President Clinton set a record for major troop deployments, with 25 in his eight-year tenure. (The notoriously hawkish Ronald Reagan sent U.S. troops out into the world only half as often.) Says Eland, "These deployments take money and time away from training for major wars, and they wear out the force, causing morale to go down."



Source: Ivan Eland, Cato Institute

BRICKBATS

◆ The city of Pompano Beach, Florida, just doesn't want some colors around. The city has passed a law requiring businesses to paint their buildings in shades "traditional" to Florida's coastal areas. City commissioners admit they don't know exactly what that means. But they know what it doesn't mean: bright colors and chartreuse. They're pretty sure white, gray, beige, tan, brown, terra cotta, and peach will be allowed. But only light shades of pink. Light shades of blue and green are okay. Darker shades of blue and green, and colors such as mauve, yellow, red, gold, and black, will be permitted only for accents.

◆ For nine years, Jayme Dias enforced the sexual harassment code in Falmouth, Massachusetts. Now the city has fired him. Dias has been accused of repeatedly trying to kiss and fondle a town employee and making unwanted calls and visits to the woman's home. Dias denies the charges, but the town administrator said there was enough evidence to remove him from his job.

◆ When a teacher fell ill at Union Intermediate High School in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, the assistant principal allegedly called in 9th grader Brandi Blackbear and questioned her about a book on magic that she had checked out of the library. Then he suspended her for 15 days, apparently because he thought she had cast a spell on the sick teacher.

—Charles Oliver

death penalty. He is now forming a special section within the university's American Civil Liberties Union chapter to oppose the policy.

Until recently, Ward notes, most students were unaware of the policy's specifics. "The entire campaign was largely portrayed [by SAFER] as a battle against the administration to get accurate statistics for cases of sexual assault and rape on campus," he says. "I feel their tactics were a little unfair to the campus, because they misrepresented their goals."

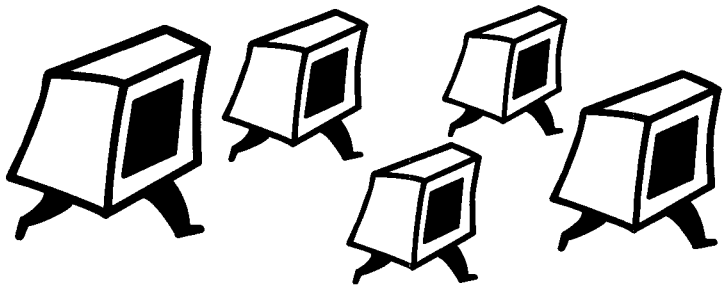
Columbia law professor Eben Moglen has also criticized the policy. The university, he stresses, needs to "make it possible for people to get serious and appropriate responses" when they raise charges of sexual misconduct. "This is certainly a situation where the university needs to have a policy that allows it to be fair, fast, and fierce," Moglen says. "This is not such a policy. It's fast. It's fierce. But it's not fair."

So far, Columbia's administration has supported the revised policy. But if student and faculty protest doesn't sway its position, a lawsuit by one of the accused—and the bad P.R. that would bring—might make the difference.

Computer Crime

By Michael W. Lynch

Once in a while big thinkers in government come up with novel ways to assist failing institutions that suck at just about everything. One such brilliant stroke was aimed at improving the famously awful public schools in the District of Columbia. In 1996 President Clinton ordered federal agencies to



donate old but useful computer equipment to the schools.

Yet there's always a catch. For a computer to be a teaching tool, it has to make it into a classroom, an event that appears to be exceedingly rare in D.C. An audit by the D.C. inspector general of select district schools found that officials could account for only 35 of the 287 pieces of computer equipment the feds donated between 1997 and 1999.

It's easy to see how such mix-ups could happen, considering that not a single school, nor the district's warehouse, kept an inventory of the equipment. In one instance, 83 pieces of computer equipment intended for Anacostia Senior High School, located in one of D.C.'s poorest neighborhoods, never made it to its putative destination. Instead, the inspector general learned, the loot was handed over to two people identified as a "church member" and "another person who represented herself as an Anacostia high school employee who works for the night school."

Such mischief isn't limited to the computer program, which helps explain why the schools are often short of such essentials as books and roofs even though they spend close to $10,000 per student a year. "Although we focused on the controls maintained over donated property, our observations lead us to believe that there is an inherent weakness in property management in general," stated the inspector general's report, which concluded that the district's complete lack of inventory controls "encourages the potential for pilfering."

Erotic Archaeology

By Charles Paul Freund

Rooms that were left sealed and undisturbed for years in a derelict Butte, Montana, house have yielded a glimpse into daily lives otherwise ignored, denied, and certainly never preserved. That's because the broken-down Victorian house that contained the time-capsule chambers was once America's oldest active brothel, the Dumas.

It did regular business with the area's copper miners from 1890 until 1982. A reform sheriff evicted the town's last madam as the last mine was closing, but even on the day she locked the Dumas' door behind her, those sealed rooms hadn't been opened in decades.

Workmen who finally broke through the doors found the hastily abandoned detritus of boomtown whoredom. The floors were littered with old cigarette packs and decks of playing cards, leftovers of the boredom that hung over a brothel waiting for the mine whistle to sound. There were liquor bottles to suggest the alcohol-

ism of the prostitutes, as well as of their customers. There were scattered lipsticks, chamber pots, an old jar of Vaseline. There was a bed sinking through the floorboards, a 1911 vibrator, a 1930s postcard encouraging safe sex.

But there was most of all the air of accident. A prostitute's past is evanescent, quick to disperse, gone with the morning. It is history of no seeming interest; it is, literally, *pornography*, a term that began its life as "writing about prostitutes."

Enter Norma Jean Almodovar. Almodovar's résumé is full of surprises. The 49-year-old Montanan was once a Los Angeles cop. She quit to become an upscale Beverly Hills prostitute (she says she wanted to make "an honest living"); became head of the L.A. chapter of COYOTE, the prostitutes' rights organization; and ran for lieutenant governor of California on the Libertarian ticket (she got 90,000 votes). Now she's founded a museum in Butte.

Almodovar and a local businessman named Rudy Giecek have taken the remains of the Dumas and restored the place to gilt shamelessness. It's a museum now, complete with player piano, an evocation that stands in for San Francisco's Barbary Coast, Washington's Hooker's Brigade, New Orleans' Storyville, and all the other vanished districts of mixed shame and pleasure, ragtime and jazz.

Some of the brothel's now-aged former customers have applauded its rebirth. So has the local paper. The Chamber of Commerce, hoping for tourist bookings, has welcomed it.

But there's a new Butte that isn't happy about the new Dumas. A group calling itself Citizens to Protect Our Youth is concerned that Butte's daughters will be tempted to become whores. As they worried in a public protest letter, "They may say, 'Let's give it a try!'"

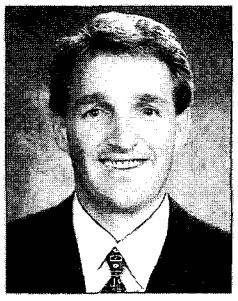
Though Almodovar seems to like shocking people by telling them that "I loved being a whore," the Dumas for her is about the remembrance of all of Butte's heritage. "If the prostitutes are forgotten, you may as well forget the miners, too," she told *Civilization* magazine. "They go hand in hand."

But *Time* reports that the Dumas is already in serious financial trouble. Last summer, hoping to get some help from active prostitutes, Almodovar invited them to town. But a prostitute's life eschews its own past. Only one showed up.

SOUNDBITE

The Missionary's Positions

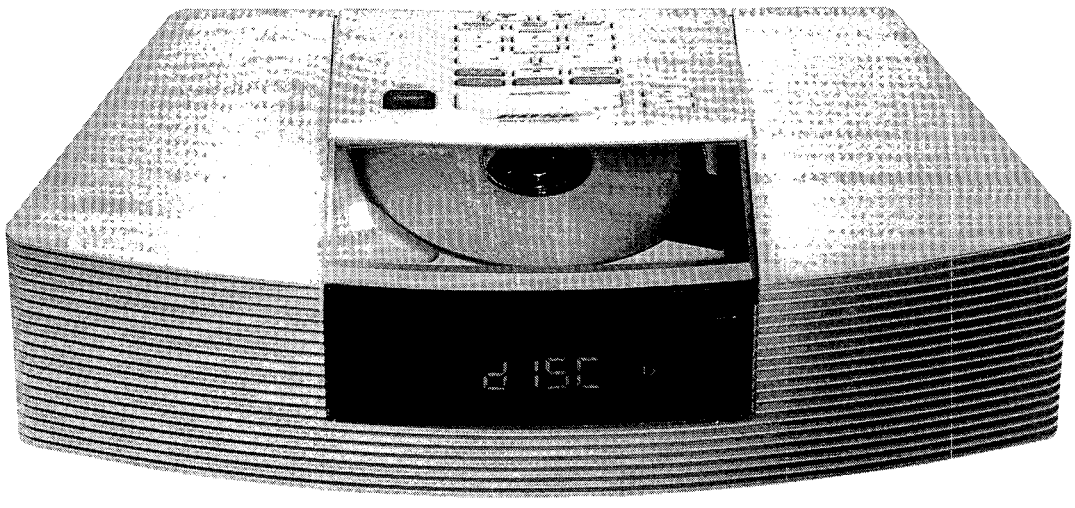
By Michael W. Lynch



Jeff Flake

After graduating from high school, Jeff Flake embarked on a Mormon mission to Zimbabwe and South Africa. The 48-year-old Republican will spend the next two years on a different sort of mission: He'll replace Rep. Matt Salmon, who voluntarily term-limited himself out of a job, as the U.S. congressman from Arizona's 1st district (see "Exit Interviews," October). Flake, the former head of Arizona's Goldwater Institute, has himself pledged to serve no more than three terms. He is also the most articulate and outspoken champion of smaller government in his freshman class. As he enters Congress in January, his goal is "to effectively advance the principles of limited government, economic freedom, and individual responsibility" and his biggest fear is that the "federal government will continue to expand and erode individual freedom." Flake talked with Washington Editor Michael W. Lynch in late November.

Q: Why did you run for Congress?
A: During my seven years at the Goldwater Institute, I enjoyed immensely the ability to gripe, complain, and moan about public policy and have none of the accountability that comes with elected office. I felt it was time to stand up and see what I could do about it.
Q: You're entering a Congress that's embarked on a low-profile spending spree and that is now pretty evenly split along party lines. How do you plan to implement your campaign mantra that "the government that governs least governs best"?
A: There are many areas in which we can move ahead right away. One is to repeal the death tax. It will pass, especially if we have a Republican in the White House and aren't forced to get a two-thirds majority. Privatization of Social Security is a popular item. It wasn't just something George W. Bush felt obligated to talk about. It resonated with voters.
Q: Your predecessor was frustrated with how hard it is to get things done in Congress. Did he offer you any advice on how to operate in D.C.?
A: He told me not to worry about re-election, that other things are more important, and I think he certainly exemplified that. He'd be the first to say it has been extremely frustrating. But somebody's got to do it. You have to try your hardest and stand firm.
Q: You get sworn in before the president is inaugurated and this year you may even get to help pick the president. Any thoughts on this historic opportunity?
A: It's something I'd rather not do. I'd rather have my first vote cast for a marginal rate tax cut.



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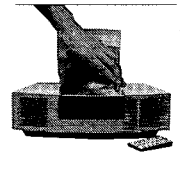

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Stand By Your Men

In which our man in Washington talks to raucous protesters, spies Al Sharpton's corpse, and seeks spiritual guidance from the Falun Dafa.

By Michael W. Lynch

Subj: Evicting the Squatter
Date: 11/30/2000
From: mwlynch@reason.com

Caught a cab to the vice president's house this afternoon to check out a protest by Bushies who want Al Gore to vacate what they now consider to be Dick Cheney's pad. When I arrived at the Naval Observatory at 34th and Massachusetts, I figured I'd get the Gore side's story first. His supporters were huddled on the south side of the intersection.

"Every vote needs to be counted," said Sylvia Diss, a retiree from Maryland's Montgomery County, and one of six Gore backers on hand. "It's the basis of our democracy." Silly me—I've always thought our democracy rested on unregulated, soft-money corporate contributions to candidates.

HENRY PAYNE

The Bush protesters claimed that Gore's stealing the election, but according to Sylvia, they stole her corner on the north side of the street, for which she claimed to have a legitimate permit. "They do not have a permit and they put me out, which says something about the rule of law," she huffed. "The policeman said it would be better for me to leave for my safety. I thought he was there to protect my safety."

The north side of the street was a bit more raucous. Sixteen people held signs proclaiming such things as, "Get Out of Dick Cheney's House," "America's Tired of Lawyers, Liars, and Spin," and "Al Concede Now."

The afternoon protesters were mainly retirees who seemed upset that the phone lines on C-SPAN were always busy. Even the young protesters seemed a bit old. "I'm a dying breed of Republican, and I feel we need to tell Al Gore to get out of Dick Cheney's house," said 14-year-old Johnny Kester. Kester's already 6 foot 2 inches, a height we both felt made him eligible to be president one day. (He said I'm tall enough for the job. But I don't agree. Not in the age of television.) He's one of only two Republicans out of 65 ninth graders at his school, he confessed, and he'd been manning the corner all week.

"The votes have been counted and counted and counted," he told me, as I looked up to him and struggled to keep my tape recorder under his chin.

I asked him what was the strangest thing to occur at the protest so far. "Yesterday somebody stuck their butt out the window."

The full moon didn't surprise me, since the protesters engaged cars driving by with "Honk for Bush" signs. There was a sharp class distinction in automotive responses. A silver Lexus and a white Range Rover honked, while drivers of an old Honda Civic and a light pickup truck gave the Bushies big thumbs down.

The distance award went to Suzanne Stillers, from the infamous Palm Beach, Florida. She was surviving the cold—it was 33 degrees with the wind chill—in a Santa Claus hat, a green shawl, and black shades. "I live there, I voted there, it's very cold here," said Stillers, who claims to have had no problems with the butterfly ballot. So why did she make the trek north? "Because what's happening is wrong," she said. "The only dimples I like are on my face." She smiled adorably, and I caught a bus home.

Subj: Supreme Freak Show
Date: 12/4/2000
From: mwlynch@reason.com

If Friday's spectacle in front of the Supreme Court is any indication, the Republican Party has a bright future: Bush has toddler support by at least three to one. And the bigger kids seem to back the Texan too. "Sore Loserman" signs sat in empty strollers. "Even an 8-year-old knows how to be a good loser," read a sign jutting up from a group of kids sporting homemade shirts declaring them "GOP Thugs." Still, there was ample evidence of the deep divisions this electoral war is causing: Ensconced in a double stroller, one twin sported a Gore sign, while the other brandished a placard for Bush.

Inside, the lawyers did the fighting. Outside, partisans were battling with signs, chants, and screaming fits. The Capitol police had created a safe space, a demilitarized zone of sorts, over which Gore supporters and Bush supporters engaged in a chant-off. "Count all votes!" yelled Gore enthusiasts waving NOW signs. "No more chads!" retorted the Bushies as they threw extra-sized chads in the air for effect. "We've been Bushwhacked!" "Democrats can't count!" And on, and on, and on.

Occasionally people tried to settle

disagreements on a mano a mano basis. On a trip past the DMZ, I ran smack into a conversation between a Texan and a New Yorker, with the latter trying to convince the former that the Lone Star State was an awful place. New Yorkers routinely forget that denizens of flyover country often like where they live and that most, if not all, Americans simply don't share a longing to live on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

The New Yorker, decked out in the uniform of an urban sophisticate (black-rimmed glasses, well-cut hair, a black three-quarter-length coat), had never even been to Texas, but that didn't stop him from claiming Bush has screwed the place up. The Texan, who had at least 6 inches and 100 pounds on his foe, responded that it was New York that really sucked. After all, he argued, they'd elected Hillary Clinton to the Senate.

Sometimes the clashes were less sophisticated. Later in the morning I came across a moderately disheveled guy yelling at a person nearby about how we can't have globalization with an 18th-century history education (the ranter was a Gore supporter, obviously). The object of his attack responded calmly in a nice Eastern European accent, by simply saying, "Bush won."

It was a tremendous freak show, with just about every nut within a 50-mile radius (including me) present. Some flew in for the occasion. On one corner, a white-bearded man in a dark gray suit, cowboy boots, and white cowboy hat held a makeshift gallows from which a doll of a black girl in an American flag skirt was hanging by her neck. A sign around his neck inscrutably declared, "Discrimination of Black Farmers."

For the three hours I was within earshot, he never stopped proclaiming, "Wake up America!" and going on about communism. Those on the more extreme end of the pro-life movement didn't miss the protest opportunity either. On a particularly memorable poster, "Does my vote count?" was written under a detached baby's head in the grasp of an abortionist's forceps. "Every third baby dies from a choice," proclaimed the poster.

A fellow in a Darth Vader costume and his partner offered a new ballot. It had no less than six Al Gores to vote for, including "Al Gore, Democrat," "Al Gore, Inventor of the Internet," "Al Gore, Alpha Male," and "Al Gore, Former Tobacco Grower." On this ballot a vote for Pat Buchanan counted for Gore as well.

There was ample evidence of the deep divisions this electoral war is causing: Ensconced in a double stroller, one twin sported a Gore sign, while the other brandished a placard for Bush.

The crazies were not entirely amateurs. While campaign finance maven Granny D was nowhere to be seen, Rev. Al Sharpton made the trek down from the Big Apple, carrying a banner that said, "This is more about Selma than Gore or Bush." I suspect Sharpton might have passed away and it's just his preserved corpse carrying on the struggle. The stiff and stone-faced man of God looked as if he were pulling a weekend at Bernie's. As his escorts carried him around, no more than 20 hangers-on followed close by, singing "This little vote of mine, I'm going to let it shine." Al's procession made laps around the Supreme Court building, with no one seeming to care much.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson did a bit better with his parade, if only because the Service Employees International Union gave some folks the morning off to follow him around. Still, it was pathetically small by Jacksonian standards. Perhaps NOW's Patricia Ireland, who was at Jackson's side, scared folks off. At any rate, it ended with a rally. I lost interest and wandered off after hearing a Florida preacher call the Palm Beach ballot a "tricky ballot we have never seen anywhere before," with the crowd chanting, "tricky, tricky."

There were sane and articulate people on both sides. "Al Gore is using lawyers to generate new votes and I think that is a dangerous step," said Doug Graham, who took the morning off from his government job to dress up in a gray ballot box made from Styrofoam and duct tape. "If you mess up, sorry, but in four years you get to do it better. Voting is not hard. You don't have to be a genius, and if you didn't do it right you disenfranchised yourself."

Dan Katz, a 32-year-old Senate staffer, takes a different view. He took time out from yelling at members of the pro-Bush brigades to tell me why all votes need to be hand counted. "I talked to my grandmother, poor thing," said Katz. "She didn't vote in Palm Beach, she voted in Broward, but she doesn't know if she pushed hard enough."

Ah, but does one ever know if one pushed hard enough? Still, such thinking doesn't convince Graham. "Who's too weak to push a hole out and look at it?" he asked.

I sought out spiritual leaders, hoping to nail down how all this may end. "We've got to unite. Politics can be so divisive," said Bill Adams, a professional Republican fundraiser who nevertheless traveled from his home in Atlanta to Tallahassee and then to D.C. to preach unity. "It's not in my hands," he humbly admitted, after disclosing that he voted for Bush. "It's in God's hands."

Members of the meditation-based spiritual movement Falun Dafa had staked out some real estate on a grass strip next to the court building. They claim to be a spiritual movement based on truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, which didn't stop them from assaulting passersby with a plethora of pamphlets, flyers, and newspapers.

"It's controlled by destiny, fate," Wattana Baunthong told me. "There's no word for it in English. It's like war. I don't know if individual efforts can help." ◆

Cathy Young

Venus at the Ballot Box

Women may lean toward the "Mommy State," but their politics are more complex than pundits recognize.

The election deadlock of 2000 that provided such a surreal—and fitting—end to the Clinton era would not have happened if only one sex had gone to the polls. An all-male electorate would have handed George W. Bush a decisive victory, 53 percent to 42 percent. If only women voted, Al Gore would have won 54 percent to 43 percent. These numbers are unlikely to startle anyone who has followed American politics over the last two decades.

Women get the credit, or the blame, for sending Bill Clinton back to the White House in 1996, when exit polls showed Bob Dole with a 1 percent lead among men. Women are also more likely to vote for Democrats in congressional elections. There is a widespread perception that Republicans are the party of men and Democrats are the party of women. Paraphrasing John Gray's pop psychology bestsellers, you might call it *Mars and Venus at the Ballot Box.*

The gender gap as we know it first emerged in the early 1980s, and it was widely attributed to the Republicans' opposition to abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment. But the reality turned out to be much more complex. Poll after poll has shown little difference of opinion between women and men on such supposedly quintessential "women's issues" (though it is likely women attach more importance to them when deciding how to vote).

The real split has been on political issues that ostensibly have little to do with gender: Women are generally more dovish than men on foreign policy and more inclined to favor an active role for government in economic and social life. The stereotype, which like many stereotypes has some basis in reality, is that men want a government that will kick the crap out of the bad guys and otherwise leave people alone, while women want a government that will take care of people. As heterodox Democratic pundit Chris Matthews puts it, it's the Daddy Party vs. the Mommy Party.

Whether this stereotype is anti-male or anti-female depends, of course, on one's perspective. Feminists have often hailed "female values" as the key to a better world. In the mid-1990s, the male voters who delivered Congress to the Republicans were often caricatured by the liberal commentariat as "angry white males" panicked about losing their privilege, determined to keep the government away from their money and their guns, and clinging to their lone-cowboy fantasies.

In a 1996 column in *Time*, Barbara Ehrenreich suggested that men's rightward drift was due largely to the trend of more men living on their own because of late marriages and more divorces, and hence embracing cutthroat individualism. (This is spectacularly wrong, since it's married men who are most likely to vote Republican.) "Cut off from daily contact with the weak and the needy, and hypnotized by the zero-sum ethic of televised sports, men were bound to be seduced by the social Darwinism of the political right," wrote Ehrenreich. "Women, on the other hand, are more likely to have a vested interest in the notion of human interdependence. ...The aim should be to close the gap as quickly as possible—by bringing the guys back into the human race."

In recent years, such left-wing male-bashing has been more than matched by right-wing tirades against female voters, often accompanied by only half-facetious quips about the folly of giving women the vote. Conservative rhetoric depicts women as soft-headed, sentimental creatures who are always looking for a protector—in the words of columnist Betsy Hart, "Uncle Sam as...the ultimate alpha male." Shortly before the last election, in a *National Review* column titled "Clueless," Kate O'Beirne blamed women's irritating voting habits on ignorance, pointing to surveys showing that women on the whole are less informed about politics than men.

On the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*, Irving Kristol recently posited a dichotomy between the good "masculine" welfare state (a limited safety net for the needy and the down-on-their-luck) and the bad "feminine-maternalistic" kind (an ever-expanding blob of indiscriminate "compassion" toward anyone who claims to be suffering). The godfather of the neoconservative movement offered this psychological analysis: "Fathers want their children to grow up to be self-reliant, self-supporting, and able to cope with a recalcitrant world. Mothers want their children to be as completely protected as possible from such a world and to be gratefully attached to them as long as they live."

So what's really going on with the gender gap? To start with the obvious, neither women nor men are anything like a solid bloc. Gender differences in voting are easily dwarfed by other gaps, including the racial divide.

In this year's presidential election, as usual, about 90 percent of black voters supported the Democratic candidate. A slim majority of white women, on the other hand, voted for Bush. (In the 1994 elections supposedly dominated by the "angry white males," 53 percent of white women also voted for Republicans in congressional races.) Single women are especially likely to vote Democratic—as many as two-thirds of them went for Gore this year—while married women are just about evenly divided. Women who are not employed outside the home continue to be a Republican constituency, with 52 percent of them backing Bush.

Of the various explanations given for the gender gap, one—female cluelessness about politics—can be quickly dismissed. True, surveys consistently find that fewer women than men give correct answers to questions measuring political knowledge. Ask men and women questions such as

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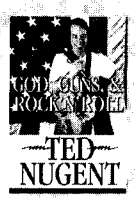

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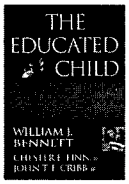

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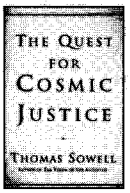

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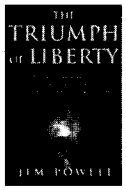

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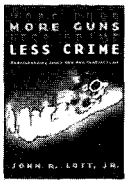

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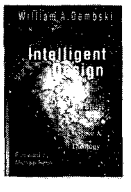

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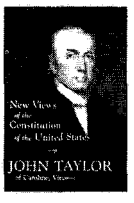

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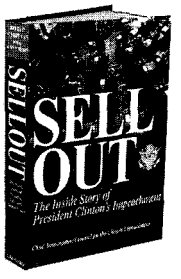

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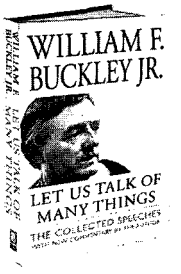

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"which party controls the House" or "name one First Amendment right," and women will score lower than men by an average margin of 10 percentage points. Women fare especially poorly on foreign policy questions, which should have made them feel right at home with Dubya. However, political scientists Scott Keeter and Michael Delli Carpini, co-authors of the 1996 book *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*, conclude that the better informed women are, the more liberal they tend to be on domestic issues —particularly single women. For men, interestingly, it's the other way around.

The women-as-statists theory has somewhat more substance to it, though it's a vast oversimplification. In a number of polls in recent years, majorities of both sexes have expressed a preference for a smaller government with fewer services over a larger government with more services; however, this preference is far stronger among men (68 percent to 23 percent, in a *Washington Post*/ABC News poll of registered voters last October) than women (50 percent to 39 percent). Yet on many specific issues, there seems to be surprisingly little difference between the sexes.

Thus, in a recent Gallup poll, both Mars and Venus favored across-the-board tax cuts, partial privatization of Social Security, and reducing the size of government agencies. In a *Washington Post* poll in September, nearly 60 percent of men and women alike said that religious, charitable, and community organizations can do a better job of providing social services than the government. In a 1997 Pew Research Center survey, 81 percent of men and 78 percent of women agreed that poor people had become too dependent on government programs (so much for Kristol's invective against mommies who don't want the kids to cut the apron strings), while 59 percent of men and 51 percent of women felt that "the federal government controls too much of our daily lives."

On other issues, such as raising the minimum wage, hiring more teachers to reduce class size in public schools, and increasing federal spending on child care for low-income families, both sexes overwhelmingly take the "liberal" position, though women do so somewhat more strongly. About three out of five American adults, with only a very slight gender gap creeping in, agree that the state has a responsibility to take care of those who can't take care of themselves. The bottom line is that there is widespread support among both sexes for limiting government but not for cutting it back dramatically. However, women and men are aligned a little differently on this generally centrist spectrum.

In recent years, left-wing male-bashing has been more than matched by right-wing tirades against female voters, including only half-facetious quips about the folly of giving women the vote.

Why are women more pro-government than men? Partly, it is undoubtedly a matter of differences in temperament that, whether cultural or innate, are quite real: Women as a group are more likely to be sensitive to perceptions of danger, which probably explains much of the differences in support for gun control and environmental regulation. (If these female attitudes are sometimes, as conservatives claim, based on mindless sentimentalism, it is probably equally true that, as feminists claim, men's greater support for military power and interventionism is sometimes based on mindless machismo.)

Partly, it may be because of perceived self-interest. In a recent article in *The American Prospect* expressing concern over white male defection from the Democratic Party, political analyst Anna Greenberg points out that since the 1960s, government programs have been geared to women more than men. Anti-poverty efforts have focused overwhelmingly on single-mother families. Even among beneficiaries of universal social insurance programs such as Social Security and Medicare, women outnumber men because they outlive them. With the exception of the military, women also predominate in public-sector jobs.

The Clinton White House, of course, elevated the wooing of women voters with government largess to a political art form: The administration constantly stressed its specific efforts on behalf of women in such areas as family leave, health care, violence, and child-support collection. (Children have been the only group invoked more frequently as a justification for various Clinton policies.) Perhaps it is no coincidence that the gender gap was wider than ever in 1996 and 2000—not only because the relentless rhetoric about benefits for women attracted women to the Democrats, but because it alienated many men.

Meanwhile, despite women's tendency to view government activism somewhat more favorably, many women clearly support policies that would reduce government control over social and economic life. So far, the GOP seems to have had only mixed success in pitching its message to these women. (The female voters with whom it fares best, survey data from the Pew Research Center suggests, are authoritarian populists who are more interested in curbing personal and social freedoms than in expanding economic ones.) To some extent, this may be because the self-styled party of smaller government is also seen as the party that remains hostile to women's new roles and new autonomy. If many conservatives' misogynist response to the gender gap is an indication, this perception isn't wholly unfair.

At the dawn of the new millennium, American women have unprecedented opportunities to pursue their lives as individuals and as adults—and they're taking advantage of these choices in unprecedented numbers. It's too bad that, at the voting booth, they still face only a choice between a Mommy Party that wants to coddle them and a Daddy Party that wants to tell them what to do.

Contributing Editor Cathy Young (CathyYoung2@cs.com) is the author of Ceasefire! Why Women and Men Must Join Forces to Achieve True Equality *(The Free Press).*

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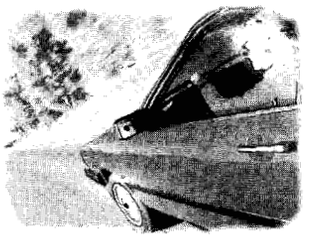

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Campaign 2000's Real Civics Lesson

How this race busts the four greatest election myths.

By Jesse Walker

Spin doctors concoct myths for a living, and in the eternal wrangling since Election Day—is it too early to start calling this the Post-Election Era? —they've been working overtime. Literally. But before we digest their latest lulus on everything from Florida election law to the statesmanlike virtues of Richard Nixon (who ever thought we'd hear pundits urging Al Gore to be even more like Tricky Dick?), we should pause to take stock of four great political myths that in a just world would now be busted once and for all.

1. The myth of the pristine election.

Of all the flotsam to emerge from Florida's electoral chaos, surely the most interesting was the matter-of-fact assertion, made by liberal and conservative commentators alike, that the Sunshine State is infamous for electoral incompetence and fraud. Meanwhile, the Republicans argued that if we have a recount in Florida, we might as well have one in virtually every closely contested state, since "irregularities" were reported all over the country. The most stunning thing about this argument was that it's true.

In other words: What's remarkable about this election wasn't the errors and deceit in the counting rooms. It's that the tally was so tight that it was worth a campaign's time to point those problems out. Close up, the making of lawmakers turns out to be as ugly as the making of laws.

2. The myth of your precious vote.

Voting is, we're told, our highest civic duty. But piety aside, the chances of one ballot actually making a difference in a national election are ridiculously small. At first glance, this race may look like the exception: For once, we had a presidential contest so close that a handful of votes could have swung it from one candidate to another. "This," countless pundits assured us, "proves that your vote really does matter."

It does nothing of the kind, even if you happen to live in one of the few Florida counties where the claim might ring true. If an election really came down to your one ballot, it now appears that the results will be challenged in court—assuming, that is, that your vote wasn't already miscounted, misplaced, or spoiled. You might as well have stayed home or written in your dog: It would've had as much effect on the outcome as voting for Bush, voting for Gore, or putting a bullet in your head the night before.

It wasn't a pleasant campaign, and the aftermath hasn't been pretty. But if nothing else, it might clear the air of some egregious canards. Like a bad date or an over-booked flight, it's been...educational.

3. The myth of political science.

Almost everyone's upset—and should be—at the exit-pollsters for getting so much wrong on election night. But what about those alleged experts who called the election wrong long before anyone cast a vote?

When political scientists "modeled" this contest, they said Gore would win in a cakewalk: The incumbent party, they explained, always wins in times of peace and prosperity. Whoops. If the Federal Trade Commission really cared about truth in labeling, it would force the nation's political science departments to strip the word "science" from their names.

4. The myth of the divided country.

This year, the Democrats nominated a centrist who, but for a tiny handful of positions, might as well be a Republican. The Republicans nominated a centrist who, but for a tiny handful of positions, might as well be a Democrat. Both failed to inspire much passion, except the negative kind. And both aimed their campaigns at moderate swing voters. (Gore made some occasional and entirely unconvincing rhetorical forays into populism, but those weren't an expression of his larger strategy; they were an effort to swat the Nader challenge.)

So it's scarcely surprising that the country's vote split down the middle. What's surprising is that so many observers have taken this to mean that—to quote David Broder—"It was as if two different nations went to vote yesterday." Please. There are deeper divisions between Jay Leno and David Letterman than there are between Bush and Gore. This country has plenty of rifts, but it has been years since we've had a presidential election that managed to ignore as many of them as this one did.

It wasn't a pleasant campaign, and the aftermath hasn't been pretty. But if nothing else, it might clear the air of some egregious canards. Like a bad date or an over-booked flight, it's been...educational.

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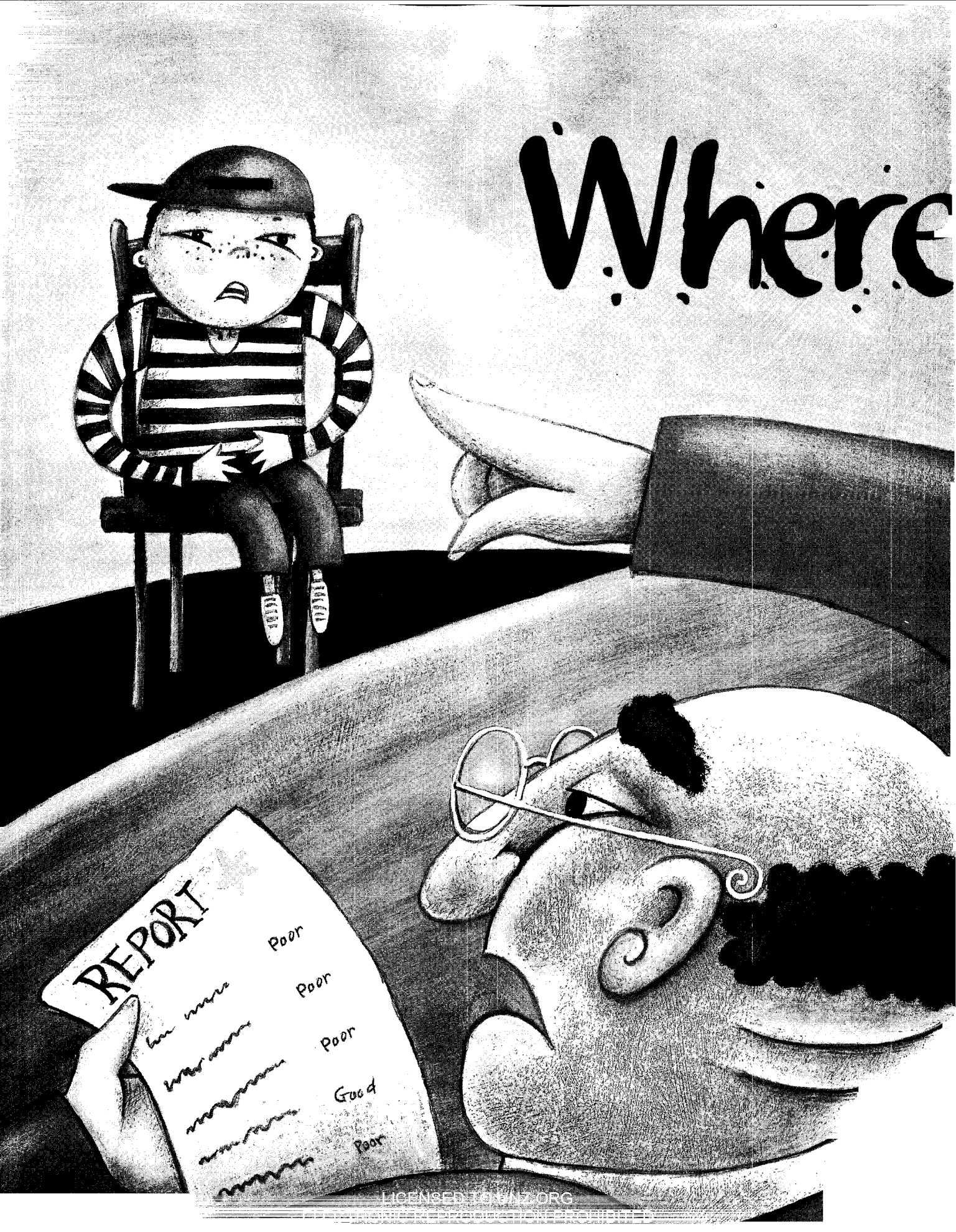

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the Boys Are

Is America shortchanging male children?

One day last September, there were two back-to-back events in adjacent rooms at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. "Beyond the 'Gender Wars,'" a symposium organized by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), was followed by a rejoinder from the Independent Women's Forum (IWF), "The XY Files: The Truth Is Out There...About the Differences Between Boys and Girls." Each event largely followed a predictable script. On the AAUW side, there was verbiage about "gender, race, and class" and hand-wringing about the "conservative backlash"; despite an occasional nod to innate sex differences, "gender equity" was pointedly defined as "equal outcomes." On the IWF side, there were affirmations of *vive la différence* and warnings about the perils of trying to engineer androgyny; despite some acknowledgment that there are not only differences between the sexes but much overlap, the old-fashioned wisdom about men and women was treated as timeless truth. And yet both discussions shared one major theme: the suddenly hot issue of boys—to be more specific, boys as the victimized sex in American education and culture.

Just a few years ago, of course, girls were the ones whose victimization by sexist schools and a male-dominated society was proclaimed on the front pages of newspapers and lamented in editorials, thanks largely to widely publicized reports released by the AAUW in the early 1990s. It was probably only a matter of time before somebody asked, "But what about boys?" By the end of the decade, headlines like "How Boys Lost Out to Girl Power" began to crop up in the media, and boys-in-crisis books began to hit the shelves.

But as the two National Press Club panels underscored, two contrasting arguments are being made on behalf of boys. In one room, there was sympathy for boys who yearn to be gentle, nurturing, and openly emotional but live in a society that labels such qualities "sissy"; in the other, there was sympathy for

By Cathy Young

boys who want only to be boys but live in a society that labels their natural qualities aggressive and patriarchal. Harvard psychiatrist William Pollack, author of the 1999 bestseller *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons From the Myths of Boyhood*, believes boys are suffering because our culture traps them in the rigid codes of traditional manhood. American Enterprise Institute scholar Christina Hoff Sommers, author of the controversial new volume *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men*, believes boys are suffering because our culture seeks to "feminize" them and devalues manhood. (Guess which of them spoke on which panel.) One camp wants to reform masculinity, the other to restore it; one seeks to rescue boys from patriarchy, the other from feminism.

Both sides, however, agree that something is rotten in the state of boyhood. *Real Boys* opens with the assertion that boys, including many who seem to be doing fine, are "in serious trouble" and "in a desperate crisis." Pollack and other gender reformers paint the typical American boy as an emotional cripple, if not a walking time bomb ready to explode into a school massacre. The shooters of Littleton and Jonesboro, Pollack has said, are merely "the tip of the iceberg."

"We used to think that the schools shortchanged girls; now the news is that schools are waging a war against boys," says psychologist Judith Kleinfeld. "Neither view is right."

In *The War Against Boys*, Sommers persuasively challenges this hysteria, noting that it's ludicrous to generalize from a few sociopaths to "millions of healthy male children" who manage to get through high school without gunning down a single person. (She fails to mention that some people in the pro-manhood camp have been just as eager to use homicidal boys as symbols of a male crisis: A couple of years ago in *Commentary*, Midge Decter wrote that "raging schoolyard murder" is what happens when boys are deprived of "manly instruction" and honorable ways to assert their masculinity.) Sommers argues that most children, male and female, are in fairly good psychological health and in no need of "fixing."

Yet Sommers herself refers to boys as "the gender at risk," and her book is hardly free of alarmism, from the title to an opening that rivals Pollack's: "It's a bad time to be a boy in America."

Gender Gap

The most tangible and effectively documented cause of concern is male academic underachievement:

- Girls make up 57 percent of straight-A students; boys make up 57 percent of high school dropouts.
- In 1998, 48 percent of girls but only 40 percent of boys graduating from high school had completed the courses in English, social studies, science, math, and foreign languages recommended as a minimum by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. (In 1987 there was no such gender gap, though only 18 percent of students met these requirements.) According to the National Center for Education Statistics, high school girls now outnumber boys in upper-level courses in algebra, chemistry, and biology; physics is the only subject in which males are still a majority.
- On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in 1996, 17-year-old girls, on average, outscored boys by 14 points in reading and 17 points in writing (on a scale of 0 to 500). While boys did better on the math and science tests, it was by margins of five and eight points, respectively.
- Women account for 56 percent of college enrollment in America. This is not due simply, as some feminists claim, to older women going back to school; among 1997 high school graduates, 64 percent of boys and 70 percent of girls went on

to college. Female college freshmen are also more likely than men to get a degree in four years.

These differences do not cut across all racial and social lines. The gender gap in higher education has reached truly startling proportions among blacks. From 1977 to 1997, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded annually rose by 30 percent for black men but by 77 percent for black women; among 1996–97 college graduates, black women outnumbered men almost 2 to 1. The "man shortage" among college-educated blacks, which has contributed to tensions over interracial dating, is singled out as a "cause for concern" in the Urban League's recent report *The State of Black America 1999*.

Among non-Hispanic whites, women now receive 55 percent of bachelor's degrees. Feminists are correct when they say this imbalance is partly due to older women going back to school after growing up in an era when girls were expected to pursue the "MRS degree." In 1998, according to the Census Bureau, 48 percent of white college students under 35 were male. But for blacks and Hispanics, a female-to-male ratio of about 3 to 2 persists even when older students are excluded.

For middle-class girls and boys, college is now as much of a given as a high school diploma. Girls from working-class and poor families, on the other hand, are significantly more likely to go to college than boys. There are complex reasons for this. About one-tenth of women in college are training for the health professions, "feminine" jobs similar in status to predominantly male skilled trades that don't require college studies. (Interestingly, female registered nurses and therapists now outearn male mechanics and construction workers.) There is also a theory that, in the new economy, a certificate from a high-tech company's training program may be worth more than a college degree, and that it's mostly young men who skip college to pursue such options. But this explanation, appealing to many feminists, remains speculative. No one knows how many people actually do this; generally, for men or women, the lack of a college degree is still a serious handicap in the marketplace.

In many cases, the "college gap" indisputably reflects a trend toward more upward mobility for women. In a 1999 Rutgers Marriage Project study of sex and relationships among non-college men and women under 30, David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead report that the women in their focus groups came across as more confident and responsible, with "clear and generally realistic plans for moving up the career ladder," including plans for going back to school. The men seemed less focused and mature; when they talked about their plans for getting ahead, it was often in terms of such "goals" as winning the lottery.

Girls Rule

Perhaps the social changes of the past three decades have made young women more self-assured and eager to use their new opportunities, while leaving many men unnerved and confused about what's expected of them. It may also be that boys, particularly those from low-income families, often become alienated from school early—both because their slower developmental timetable causes them to fall behind girls and because school is a "feminized" environment with mostly female authority figures and boy-unfriendly rules that emphasize being quiet and sitting still.

Some teachers may be prejudiced against boys, regarding them as little brutes or rascals. In a 1990 survey commissioned by the AAUW, children were asked whom teachers considered smarter and liked better; the vast majority of boys and girls alike said "girls." Journalist Kathleen Parker recalls that her son, now a teenager, had a grade school teacher who openly said she liked girls more and singled out boys for verbal abuse—such as telling a student who had his feet up on the desk, "Put your feet down; I don't want to look at your genitalia."

Traditional schoolmarmish distaste for unruly young males may be amplified by modern gender politics. Some educators clearly see boys as budding sexists and predators in need of re-education. Some classrooms become forums for diatribes about the sins of white males, and some boys may be hit with absurd charges of misconduct—such as Jonathan Prevette, the Lexington, North Carolina, first-grader punished with a one-day suspension in 1996 for kissing a girl on the cheek.

"If you listen to 10- or 11-year-old boys, you will hear that school is not a very happy place for them," says Bret Burkholder, a counselor at Pierce College in Puyallup, Washington, who also works with younger boys as a baseball coach. "It's a place where they're consistently made to feel stupid, where girls can walk around in T-shirts that say 'Girls rule, boys drool,' but if a boy makes a negative comment about girls he'll have the book thrown at him."

Even apart from feminism, some "progressive" trends in education may have been detrimental to boys. For example, British researchers have found that "whole language" reading instruction, based on word recognition by shapes, pictures, and contextual clues rather than knowledge of letters, is particularly ineffective with male students.

Early "school turnoff" may cause many boys to develop an anti-learning mindset the British have labeled "laddism"—a mirror image of the prefeminist notion that it isn't cool for a girl to be too bright. "The boys become oppositional and band together in the belief that manly culture doesn't include grade grubbing," observes University of Alaska psychologist Judith Kleinfeld. For black boys, this attitude may be exacerbated by the notion that learning is a "white thing."

Sommers convincingly argues that boys' academic shortcomings have not received proper attention because the discussion of gender and education has been hijacked by "girl partisans." In the 1992 report *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, the AAUW brushed aside boys' disadvantages and explicitly warned against targeted efforts to remedy their deficits in literacy. A few years later, it effectively hushed up a study it had commissioned—*The Influence of School Climate on Gender Differences in the Achievement and Engagement of Young Adolescents*, by University of Michigan psychologist Valerie Lee and her associates—when the findings failed to support the short-changed-girls premise.

These days, feminists are more willing to admit the good news about girls. The AAUW's new leitmotif, evident at the

"Beyond the Gender Wars" symposium, is that we should stop pitting girls against boys in a victimhood contest and work to make the schools better for everyone—which sounds fine, except that it's a little disingenuous to trumpet girls' victimization and then shout, "Let's not play victim!" as soon as boys' problems are mentioned. What's more, the "gender equity" crowd still grasps for any excuse to discount young men's problems. If more women go to college, said some AAUW panelists, that's because they need it just to break even with men who finish high school. In fact, while female college graduates over 25 earn only 15 percent more than male high school graduates, that group includes older women who went to college with no plans for a career and were out of the labor force for years as well as women who went back to school after raising a family and have limited work experience. This hardly means that young women who are going to college today will do only slightly better financially than young men who are not.

Clash of the Stereotypes

"Boy partisans" can exaggerate too. In his remarks at the IWF's National Press Club event, Rutgers University anthropologist Lionel Tiger inflated the 2-to-1 female-to-male ratio among black college graduates to 5 to 1. (When pressed afterward, he could not recall the source for this surprising figure.) In *The War Against Boys*, Sommers asserts that recent data on high school and college students clearly lead to "the conclusion that girls and young women are thriving, while boys and young men are languishing." Yet this dramatic statement is contradicted further down the page by her own summary of Valerie Lee's study of gender and achievement, which she lauds as "responsible and objective." Lee reports that sex differences in school performance are "small to moderate" and "inconsistent in direction"—boys fare better in some areas, girls in others.

More boys flounder in school (and, as Sommers acknowledges, more of them reach the highest levels of excellence, from the best test scores to top rankings in prestigious law schools). But it's important to put things in perspective. Boys are twice as likely as girls to be shunted into special education with labels that may involve a high degree of subjectivity or even bias, but we are talking about a fairly small proportion of all children. About 7 percent of boys and 3 percent of girls are classified as learning disabled, 1.5 percent of boys and 1.1 percent of girls as mentally retarded; just over 1 percent of boys and fewer than half as many girls are diagnosed with severe emotional disturbances.

Clearly, many boys are doing well; just as clearly, it's an overstatement to say that girls in general are "thriving," since all too often the educational system serves no one well. Twelfth-grade girls may do better than boys on reading and writing tests, but their average scores still fall short of the level that indicates real competence—the ability to understand and convey complicated information.

There's quite a bit of exaggeration, too, in the notion of schools as a hostile environment for boys. Few would dispute that boys tend to be more physically active and less patient than girls; but these differences are far less stark than the clichés deployed in the "boy wars." In a 1998 Department of Education study, 65 percent of boys and 78 percent of girls in kindergarten were described by teachers as usually persistent at their tasks, and 58 percent of boys and 74 percent of girls as usually attentive—a clear yet far from interplanetary gap.

Still smaller are the differences between boys' and girls' views of the school climate. Surprisingly, in a 1995 survey by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, virtually the same percentages of female and male high school seniors said they liked school. When the question "Whom do teachers like more?" is posed in such a way that they must select one favored sex, kids are likely to answer "girls." Yet when asked about their own experiences, boys are only slightly less likely than girls to say that teachers listen to them, that they call on them often and encourage them, and that discipline and grading at their school are fair.

Even the image of sexual harassment policies as a wholesale anti-boy witch hunt is too simplistic. For one thing, girls also get caught in the net; last fall, two eighth-grade girls in Euless, Texas, were punished for hugging in the hallway. The bizarre overreactions (which even the Department of Education cautions against) reflect not only gender warfare but the zero tolerance lunacy that has also caused children to be suspended under anti-drug policies for giving an aspirin to a friend. Moreover, these stories coexist with cases in which real sexual assaults are ignored or covered up by school officials.

Some critics of girls-as-victims mythology are uncomfortable with sweeping claims about the plight of boys. "All this haggling about who's the *real* victim is absurd—and unseemly, coming from Americans and describing what must be the most fortunate generation of young people ever to inhabit the planet," says Daphne Patai, a comparative literature scholar at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and author of *Heterophobia: Sexual Harassment and the Future of Feminism.*

Judith Kleinfeld, who authored the 1996 paper "The Myth That Schools Shortchange Girls," published by the Washington, D.C.-based Women's Freedom Network (of which I am vice president), credits Sommers with drawing attention to an often-ignored problem but wishes her argument had been more nuanced. "We used to think that the schools shortchanged girls; now the news is that schools are waging a war against boys, that girls are on top and boys have become the second sex," says Kleinfeld. "Neither view is right. We should be sending a dual message: one, boys and girls do have characteristic problems, and we need to be aware of what they are; two, boys and girls are also individuals. Unfortunately, there's a lot of exaggeration going on, and a lot of destructive stereotyping by both sides."

Monolithic Manhood

Stereotypes and exaggerations fly just as freely when it comes to the larger debate about how boys should be raised in an age of sexual equality. Gender reformers like Pollack and his Harvard colleague Carol Gilligan, the psychologist and pro-

fessor of gender studies who pioneered the notion of girls' failing self-esteem in the 1980s before turning her attention to boys, lament that patriarchal norms force boys to separate prematurely from their families, especially their mothers, and to deny their pain, sadness, vulnerability, and fear. As a result, Pollack argues, boys disconnect from their true selves and go into a kind of emotional deep freeze, or even become bullies to prove their manhood.

Real Boys is full of "gender straitjacket" horror stories in which boys barely out of diapers are called "wimps" and told to "act like a man" (usually by fathers) when they are scared or upset. Pollack's dismay is understandable, but how many American fathers really act out such John Wayne parodies? The generalizations are especially shaky since most of Pollack's conclusions seem to be based on troubled boys in his clinical practice. While he occasionally tempers his melodramatic claims, observing that "many, if not most, boys maintain an inner wellspring of emotional connectedness," this does little to change the bleak overall picture.

Would conservative champions of boyhood also praise traditionally masculine fathers who came to honor and cherish their sons' "soft" qualities, even when those sons chose to become hairdressers?

Mark Kiselica, a psychologist at the College of New Jersey and past president of the American Psychological Association's Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity, bristles at the notion of boys as "emotional mummies" cut off from relationships. In fact, recent studies by psychologist Susan Harter and her colleagues at the University of Denver, which refute Gilligan's theory that girls lose self-confidence as teenagers, also suggest that adolescent boys are only slightly less open about their thoughts and feelings with parents and friends than are girls. In a 1997 survey by Louis Harris and Associates for the Commonwealth Fund, only one in five teenage boys (and one in seven girls) said they talked to no one when they felt stressed or depressed.

If there's a truth in the arguments of would-be reformers of masculinity, it is that in the past 30 years "gender rules" have been loosened for women more than for men: A boy taking ballet classes raises more eyebrows than a girl playing hockey. But these issues shouldn't and won't be resolved by a bureaucracy of social engineers. The reformers, in any case, vastly overestimate the rigidity and the power of traditional male norms, depicting masculinity as far more monolithic than it has ever been. Most parents don't need Pollack to remind them that, when talking to sons about male family members or friends, they should praise these men's warm and nurturing qualities.

If the "save the males" crowd inflates the harm hypermasculine cultural values can do to American boys at the turn of the millennium, many conservatives probably underestimate it—and, in turn, inflate the perils of creeping androgyny. To be sure, there are educators eager to impose their egalitarian vision on other people's children by banning toy guns from preschools, prohibiting "segregated" play at recess, or herding boys into quilting groups and prodding them to talk about how they feel. It's difficult to tell how widespread this is outside the elite Eastern private schools from which Sommers gets several of her examples, where parents not only choose but pay big money to send their offspring. On the other hand, in many communities, boys still face strong pressure to be jocks—and the jock culture probably is more damaging to boys' learning than the occasional quilting circle.

Not unlike the feminists, many conservatives have a vision of a monolithic, virtually unchanging "culture of manhood" that boys must join. Yet one does not have to believe that gender is only a "social construct" to know that standards of male behavior and beliefs about male nature in different times and

places have varied as greatly as male dress. Two hundred years ago, it wasn't unusual or inappropriate for men to weep at sentimental plays and for male friends to exchange letters with gushy expressions of affection.

The truth is, both efforts to produce "unisex" children and efforts to enforce traditional masculine or feminine norms are likely to warp children's individuality. Kleinfeld had a chance to observe this when raising her own children: a girl who liked mechanical tools and had an aptitude for science, yet resisted efforts to get her interested in a scientific career and chose humanitarian work instead, and a quiet, gentle boy who was an avid reader. "We tried to get him active in sports, but we were fighting his individual nature," says Kleinfeld. "The one time he made a touchdown in football, he was running the wrong way."

If there's an answer to the "boy question," it lies in getting away from a one-size-fits-all model and making sure that parents and children have as many choices as possible.

In *The War Against Boys*, Sommers praises feminists who came to honor and cherish their sons' masculine qualities, among them a pacifist-liberal writer whose son chose a military career. But would conservative champions of boyhood also praise traditionally masculine fathers who came to honor and cherish their sons' "soft" qualities, even when those sons chose to become elementary school teachers or hairdressers?

Male Achievement Initiatives

While boys may not be a "second sex," there are clearly distinct educational problems that disproportionately affect male students. Surely it makes sense to look at these problems and consider some gender-specific solutions. Yet such efforts have been virtually nonexistent, largely, no doubt, because they are seen as politically incorrect. In November 1999, Goucher College in Baltimore held a conference called "Fewer Men on Campus: A Puzzle for Liberal-Arts Colleges and Universities." While the event was ostensibly free of any anti-feminist stridency, it drew hostile barbs from the AAUW and warnings about a "backlash" against women's gains from the American Council on Education's Office of Women in Higher Education. (ACE has no special office addressing the issues of men, the new minority on college campuses.) Government efforts to advance "gender equity" in education remain focused solely on inequities allegedly holding back girls and women.

While programs to remedy girls' underachievement in math, science, and computers have proliferated in recent years, funded by the government and by private groups such as the National Science Foundation, there are no programs targeting boys' deficits in reading and writing. (Such programs seem to be working well in England.) Literacy is a popular issue for politicians of both parties, and this year the U.S. Department of Education has given nearly $200 million in grants to state initiatives aimed at improving reading skills in elementary school as part of the Reading Excellence Program. But when I asked project coordinators in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and the District of Columbia if any of these programs would address the gender gap in literacy, it was obvious that the question took them by surprise.

Efforts to help boys can be regarded as suspect even if they target black boys, who have an acknowledged place in the pantheon of the oppressed. In 1996, acting on a complaint from a female student's mother, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights ruled that the Black Male Achievement Initiative, a mentoring network in the predominantly black schools of Prince George's County, Maryland, that matched boys with successful professional men, had to be opened to

girls. Zack Berry, a staffer in the school district's Office of Youth Development, has no doubt that boys suffered as a result: "Once the program went coed, we found we were doing very well by the young ladies but we were losing our boys left and right, especially in high school." In a few schools, he says, male participation dwindled to less than one-fifth of the total.

This bias against male-only services may be waning. Even the story of Black Male Achievement Initiative has something of a happy ending. In 1999, after the school district collected data showing that boys did not fare as well as girls and presented them to the Office of Civil Rights, the OCR reversed itself and gave a green light to single-sex mentoring programs and activities. Another all-male program that has chapters in several mostly black public schools in Maryland, BROTHERS (Brothers Reaching Out To Help Each Reach Success), has met with no objections so far. "Faculty and adults have rallied around BROTHERS because it has helped a group of kids who just weren't buying into school," says Mike Durso, the principal of Springbrook High School in Silver Spring. The group, which arranges for teens to mentor and tutor younger boys, has been credited with improving discipline, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

Single-sex education, whose popularity for girls surged after the girl crisis hysteria of the early 1990s—leading to the somewhat controversial opening of an all-girl public charter school in New York in 1996 and a sister school in Chicago last fall—deserves more consideration for boys as well. True, there are few reliable data on how children fare in single-sex vs. coed classrooms; if single-sex schools often do better, it may be because they are the product of a conscious effort to create a more academically oriented, more orderly, more individually focused learning environment.

Nonetheless, single-sex schooling may be the best option for some boys and girls, not necessarily because the sexes are so radically different but because some teenagers learn best without the distracting presence of the other sex. Susan Harter and other researchers have found that the fear of looking stupid in front of opposite-sex classmates is a major deterrent to speaking in class for boys and girls alike. Boys in particular may try to impress girls by acting "cool" or goofy. Counterintuitively, many education experts believe that all-boy classrooms may also allow boys to show their gentle side—pursue interests in art or poetry, discuss the emotions of literary characters—without the fear of appearing "girly."

As for coeducational schools, it goes without saying that they should not be places where children are insulted because of their sex or turned into lab rats for social engineers bent on reinventing gender. Fortunately, unlike the parents of college students, people with children in primary or secondary schools usually have some idea of what's happening in classrooms, and they can help keep the gender warriors in check. Several years ago, a particularly noxious sexual harassment prevention curriculum introduced in Minnesota, which would have had 7-year-olds reciting a solemn pledge to combat harassment, was shelved because of parental opposition and adverse publicity.

Many of the "unmanly" educational fads conservatives deplore are bad for reasons that have little to do with gender. "Cooperative" teaching can turn off bright girls as well as competitive boys. Nor is touchy-feely pedagogy, such as writing assignments requiring students to explore intimate issues, necessarily "female-friendly." Girls who like sharing confidences with each other may balk at "sharing" with teachers. A 1994 *Los Angeles Times* story described reactions to a controversial statewide exam with essay questions about conflicts with parents and regrets about the past. Most of the students who were quoted as complaining about invasive questions were girls.

On the other hand, it's doubtful that many people will worry that their sons will be emasculated by making quilts at school, or by adopting the persona of a famous woman in a class presentation. It would be interesting, though, to see a feminist teacher's reaction if a boy chose Margaret Thatcher as his heroine instead of Anita Hill.

Answering the 'Boy Question'

If there's an answer to the "boy question," it lies in getting away from a one-size-fits-all model, whether feminist or traditionalist, and making sure that parents and children have as many choices as possible. Right now, parents with sexually egalitarian values can generally rely on free government schools to transmit these values to their children, while those who want their children's education to instill traditional beliefs about sex roles have to pay tuition at a private school (as well as taxes to help finance the public schools). Parents who want single-sex schooling for their children are also left with fewer and more expensive options than those satisfied with coeducation. This is one problem that school vouchers could address.

The more diversity there is in education, the more it can be tailored to each child's individuality. Even those who agree that boys have specific needs based on sex-linked traits may define these needs quite differently. Sommers stresses strict discipline in a teacher-led, structured classroom; Kleinfeld suggests that active and nonconformist children, who are disproportionately male, would do well in "open classrooms where children move around a lot," with "teachers who enjoy wiseacres." Each prescription is undoubtedly right for some boys. And there are still other boys who, defying averages, do not thrive on competition and do better in cooperative settings.

We are still far away from a truly diverse educational system. But we have come a long way toward a diverse society that respects both the maleness and the individuality of boys and young men. This diversity will always have room for conservative subcultures that uphold traditional ideals of manhood, as well as for feminist-pacifist communes in which a little boy who uses a stick as a toy sword immediately has the weapon confiscated. But I'd like to think that the future belongs to the feminist who can respect her son the career soldier and to the career soldier who can respect his son the hairdresser. ◆

Contributing Editor Cathy Young (CathyYoung2@cs.com) is the author of Ceasefire: Why Women and Men Must Join Forces to Achieve True Equality *(The Free Press).*

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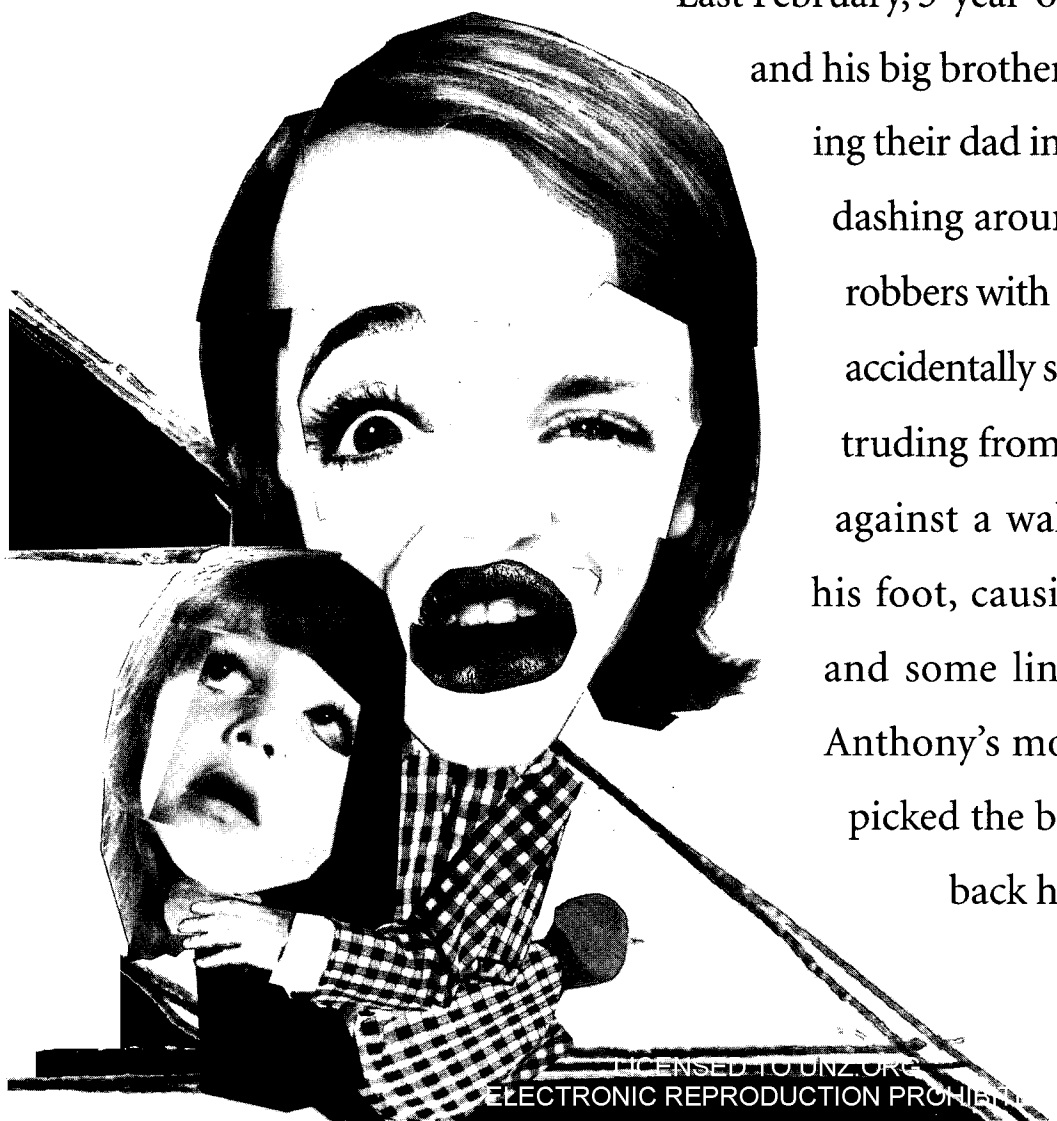
octors' Orders

Parents battle medical authorities for control of their children • By Brian Doherty

For uncertainty about a nail, a child was nearly lost. Last February, 5-year-old Anthony Mitchell and his big brother Dwayne were visiting their dad in Indianapolis. While dashing around playing cops and robbers with his brother, Anthony accidentally stepped on a nail protruding from a bunk bed leaning against a wall. The nail pierced his foot, causing a little bleeding and some lingering pain. When Anthony's mom, Pam Anderson, picked the boys up to take them back home to Terre Haute,



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about 50 miles away, she thought the injury probably wasn't that big a deal. She decided that if Anthony was still hurting by the time they got home, she'd take him to the hospital there. A doctor could make sure that no piece of anything had broken off, and a tetanus shot might not be a bad idea.

When they got home, Anthony was still complaining of some foot pain, so Anderson took her son to the emergency room at Terre Haute's Union Hospital. She assumed that if they didn't find anything in his foot, they'd bandage him up and send him home. But Anthony, as kids are prone to do, got his words a little mixed up. A doctor heard him saying something about stepping on "a needle" at his dad's. Anderson overheard a doctor say

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something about calling Child Protective Services (CPS). Worried, she called in *her* mother, Pamela Taliaferro. Anthony's grandma came to the hospital and, in front of a doctor, asked Anthony, "Now, what happened back at your papa's?"

"I stepped on a needle, Granny—you know, the kind of needle you hammer in a board."

While they were waiting for CPS to show up at the hospital, a doctor called Anthony's dad and asked him what had happened to his son. Dwayne Mitchell told them his son had stepped on a nail. "When the doctor hung up the phone with Anthony's dad," Anderson recalls, "I heard him say pretty loudly, 'Fuck!' He already had called in CPS, and now he was realizing there wasn't any reason for it. I know what they were thinking. They instantly make the leap: black—needle—drugs—AIDS."

Anderson's hunch proved correct. The hospital had already given Anthony a dose of AZT, the DNA-chain terminator widely prescribed as an anti-AIDS drug. Terre Haute CPS agents arrived and, despite a statement from Anthony's older brother that corroborated the nail story, decided that the doctor had done the right thing, and that Anthony should keep taking AZT just in case the boy had stepped on an AIDS-infected needle. The agents then sent Anderson and Anthony home with two bottles of AZT pills, with instructions to give the drug to Anthony and see a doctor at a clinic in a few days for a check-up. CPS agents warned her that if she didn't bring Anthony back to the doctor, they might have to come take Anthony away from her. For *his* protection.

"I took Anthony to the clinic," Anderson says. "The receptionist said the doctor couldn't see me right then. I said, 'I'm not leaving until he sees me. They told me they'd take my son from me if he didn't see Anthony.' She tells me I'll have to wait two hours. I waited. What else could I do? The doctor finally comes in and asks how Anthony is doing on the medicine. I said 'I'm not giving him AZT.' For what? He didn't step on a needle. They didn't even check him for tetanus, they were so sure about this AZT nonsense. The doctor said, 'Ma'am, there's nothing I can do for you since you aren't giving him AZT.' I put Anthony's socks on and left. My mom's house was five minutes away. By the time I got to mom's house, the CPS had already called her. I got on the phone with them, and my mom thought of something clever to tell them—tell them that the reason we weren't giving Anthony the medicine is because he can't take pills since he's only 5 years old."

That didn't settle the matter. Anderson was told a doctor could FedEx her liquid AZT. When she continued to demur about giving the drug to her son, CPS officials decided they'd had enough of her insubordination and went after Anthony. They sent over police squad cars and special police dog units, blocking the front and back doors of the house where Anderson lived with her sons. (Though CPS refused to talk with me for this story, Terre Haute police confirm that it is standard procedure to send armed police as backup in CPS custody cases.) Luckily, Anderson and Anthony weren't home when the cops showed up. But a cousin who witnessed the raid warned Anderson, who then realized she was in more trouble than she had thought.

Anthony's aunt had heard about an organization called the International Coalition for Medical Justice. ICMJ was a nonprofit legal advocacy group formed in 1999 to provide legal and financial aid to people who think their liberties are being violated in the name of medical treatment. Before closing its doors due to a lack of funds last September, ICMJ gave legal aid or advice in dozens of cases where a government authority had tried to override parents' decisions about proper medical care for their children.

Pam Anderson got in touch with Deane Collie, ICMJ's executive director. Collie recalls that once she began making phone calls on Anderson's behalf and let it be known she had legal counsel on her side, CPS agreed to drop the case. But it warned that if Anthony were to come back with a positive HIV test within

the next 12 months, Anderson would be charged with felony criminal intent to harm.

The conflict between a parent's wishes and the state's notions of how to protect children's health has traditionally been fought on religious grounds, often through cases involving Christian Science or other sects that reject standard medical care. But in a largely secular contemporary America, such conflicts increasingly go beyond religion. (ICMJ deliberately avoided religious cases.) Parents caught up in heated scientific and ethical debates are finding themselves threatened with loss of their children, or what amounts to nearly the same thing, loss of legal control of their children. Fortunately, in a world of increasing access to information—and one in which authorities of all sorts hold less clout than they used to—many parents are fighting back.

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Kathleen Tyson is another mother who ran afoul of the law because she didn't agree with government officials' medical prescriptions for her child. Tyson wanted to breast-feed her second child, Felix, who was born in 1998. That isn't normally a controversial decision.

In Tyson's case, however, it became one. Tyson is HIV-positive, though to date she has shown no signs of illness. (Her husband and older child, a daughter, both test negative for HIV.) When she expressed her desire to breast-feed Felix to the staff of Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene, Oregon, the cops were called in to help change her mind.

"Someone from juvenile court showed up with Eugene police officers, in full dress with guns, to serve us papers," Tyson recalls. "They asked if I intended to follow the doctor's orders not to breast-feed Felix. I said no, and the woman from juvenile court gave us papers saying we had to appear in court and were being charged with intent to harm, and that Felix was no longer in my legal custody." This was within 48 hours of her son's birth. "I thought if they took him away from me, I'd just die," she says, her voice cracking.

A judge ordered Tyson to give her son AZT for six weeks and to refrain from breast-feeding him. (Felix never tested positive for HIV himself.) A county nurse and a caseworker from Eugene's Services to Children and Families showed up every week to make sure she was giving her baby the AZT. They would also watch Felix and Tyson, looking for telltale signs, such as the infant's reaching for her breasts, that might indicate she'd been illicitly breast-feeding him. During court proceedings challenging the child protection agency's dictates, Tyson turned in lab results showing that her breast milk tested negative for HIV. The judge would not allow that evidence in the hearing, claiming that the scientific principle that breast milk might contain HIV was settled. The judge decided that the state did have an interest in continuing to forbid Tyson from breast-feeding her son. Tyson's caseworker asked her to not talk about the case with the press, a command she feels free to ignore now that the state has returned full legal custody to her. That happened in December 1999, after Felix was past breast-feeding age. She still worries about harm she might have done her son by giving him AZT.

Indeed, although officials at Eugene's Services to Children and Families were certain they knew best—and had their treatment regimen enforced by the courts—the proper treatment for infants exposed to HIV is a matter of much controversy. The original preferred treatment was AZT. But a study headed by Louise Kuhn of Columbia University, reported in the July issue of the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, found that AZT exposure was associated with increased risk of death among infants. She and her colleagues looked at 325 HIV-positive infants and found that 44 percent who received AZT developed AIDS or died before reaching their first birthday, while only 24 percent of those not exposed to AZT died. (Kuhn also found that more-current multidrug therapies managed to avoid death by age 1 in all the kids, whether they had been exposed to AZT or not. Drug therapy skeptics wonder what will happen to these kids as they get older. The current state of scientific knowledge can't answer that question adequately.)

Similarly, researchers at a Brazilian university published a study in the June issue of the *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* that concluded that HIV-positive infants exposed to AZT were five to six times as likely to develop full-blown AIDS as HIV-positive infants who were not exposed to AZT.

George Kent is chairman of the political science department at the University of Hawaii at Honolulu and works with United Nations task forces on nutrition and human rights. As an expert on the benefits of breast-feeding, he was called in to testify on the human rights implications of the Tyson case. Because he

wasn't a medical doctor, he wasn't permitted to take the stand. In the testimony he wasn't allowed to give, Kent outlined a perspective that seems to strike a reasonable middle ground between parental autonomy and the state's interest in the lives of young citizens. "The state may not intervene simply because the parents are not following what the state deems to be optimum child rearing practices," he contends. "Similarly, the state may not intervene when there is no clear consensus regarding the effectiveness and risks of the proposed treatment....Governments may justifiably block individuals from making decisions in which their decision is certain to lead to an extremely bad outcome, such as death or severe injury." Kent notes that a study published last March in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* found similar mortality rates in breast- and formula-fed children of HIV-positive mothers.

Local and state government
taken children away from parent
from hyperactivit

Kathleen Tyson wanted to avoid feeding her child AZT, a powerful cell killer originally designed in 1964 for cancer chemotherapy but abandoned because it killed too many healthy cells as well. Yet she was forced to do so by state authorities.

At least one court has granted a parent the right to refuse anti-HIV drugs for her children. Valerie Emerson, who herself is HIV-positive, watched her daughter, who was taking anti-HIV drugs, die at age 4. As a result of the experience, she refused to give similar treatments to her then-4-year-old son, Nikolas. So the state of Maine tried to take custody of the boy and prescribe their preferred anti-AIDS drug regime.

A state district court in Maine, however, ruled against the state, noting that doctors had given Emerson "all the information currently available from the limited experience the medical community has had in this treatment for children" and that they "could not give her any definitive information concerning long term effects....In effect, treatment is being provided to sufferers of this illness at the same time as statistics and efficacy studies are being conducted." Since the various treatment regimens were "changing constantly," the district court decided that Emerson should not lose custody of her son because she didn't want him to participate in what was essentially an experimental treatment plan. Maine's Supreme Court eventually upheld the judgement of the district court.

It's hardly surprising that HIV treatment is one of the hot areas of contention between parents and medical authorities. Not only does AIDS pose many serious and legitimate public health concerns, but it's far from clear what the best ways of treating it are. But legal conflicts between child services agents who are convinced they know best and parents who insist on their rights to raise their children as they see fit run the gamut. Representatives of local and state governments have enforced unwanted treatment plans or taken children away from parents in cases involving conditions ranging from hyperactivity to obesity to hepatitis B to ulcerative colitis.

In August, Albuquerque's Children, Youth, and Families Department took a 3-year-old away from her parents because the state decided she was too fat. In October a state district court judge announced an agreement to eventually return the child but cloaked the details under a gag order. (New Mexico news organizations, in concert with the Associated Press, challenged the gag order, but the New Mexico Supreme Court upheld it.) In October in Utica, New York, the parents of 77 middle school kids were threatened with neglect charges by local child protection agencies if they didn't get their kids vaccinated for hepatitis B, a disease almost always spread through intravenous drug use or sex with multiple partners. Vaccines themselves pose possible, if rare, health risks that some parents wanted to avoid.

In July a family court judge in Albany County, New York, ordered Michael and Jill Carroll to continue feeding Ritalin, a popular drug used to treat hyperactivity and other juvenile behavior problems, to their son Kyle. The Carrolls had taken Kyle off the drug because they were unhappy with its effects. They ended up in court after a school counselor reported them to the local child protective services agency for neglect.

"Ritalin solved the problem for the school," says Jill Carroll, "but the side effects were too much. Kyle hardly slept or ate. After a while he started complaining of—this was kind of weird—these pains. There was something wrong with his legs, he'd say: He had 'wigglies' in his leg. Every time he drank water, he said, it felt like it was 'trickling' from his brain." Kyle's insomnia and loss of appetite are not uncommon among kids on Ritalin. Other reported side effects include heart palpitations, nausea, anxiety, and psychoses. And the side effects can often lead to a roller coaster of psychoactive medications as new drugs are prescribed to cope with them.

Government agents seem quick to drug kids. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a story in 1998 looking at kids in foster care and other forms of government supervision in California. Reporter Tracy Weber found that "children under state protection in California group and foster homes are being drugged with potent, dangerous psychiatric medications, at times just to keep them obedient and docile for their overburdened caretakers."

Ritalin, like AZT, is embroiled in scientific and cultural controversy, with a dominant medical model being combated by an increasingly vocal minority of doctors who point out Ritalin's chemical and functional similarity to cocaine and amphetamine (normally considered bad for kids). Skeptics also note that the disease for which it is allegedly a cure, "attention deficit hyperactivity disorder," is better recognized as a set of behaviors that teachers find irritating, with no objectively verifiable chemical or organic cause.

Physicians and psychologists who publicly oppose dosing kids with Ritalin, such as Peter Breggin, Fred Baughman, and Richard De Grandpre, all report hearing from many distraught parents who, like the Carrolls, are upset about what the drug does to their children. Such parents commonly report implied pressure from schools to drug their child lest the kid be booted from school. Thus, schools can leverage coercive power without openly bringing in child protective services or the courts.

Facing a court order to continue drugging their son, the Carrolls found another pediatrician, who decided Kyle didn't need Ritalin after all. Since it was a doctor's decision and not theirs, this satisfied the court order (and shed some light on the scientific value of Ritalin diagnoses). Kyle is now off Ritalin, and is in a special education school instead of the traditional public one that called in the cops. He's doing fine, says his mother. Still, the state insists it must drop in from time to time. "The only thing they do is still come out and make sure everything is all right," she tells me. "Every other week, they come in and say, 'Hi, Kyle.' Kyle says 'hi,' and they walk away."

As the Carrolls' experience shows, the state doesn't like to step out once it has a foot in your life. This is a lesson also learned by Tina Phifer, a New York City accountant and single mother who homeschooled her daughter, Amkia. In 1997, Phifer brought Amkia, then 9, to Montefiore Medical Center for her ongoing problems with ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory disease of the colon usually characterized by bloody diarrhea and abdominal pain. Phifer is interested in non-Western medicine and kept an especially close eye on the drug treatments Amkia received. Phifer was alarmed when she heard doctors discussing taking out Amkia's colon because her bleeding stool problems were not going away despite all the drugs.

"Not only weren't they paying attention to me, the treatment itself was incompetent in terms of things like blood drawings," says Phifer. "They had student interns who couldn't find veins and would stick her four times and damage her arms. I told them that she'd had allergic reactions to the antibiotic amoxicillin in the past, and they still gave it to her." One of the drugs Phifer questioned was Rowasa. The Food and Drug Administration declared that the drug's promotional materials illegally and mistakenly implied "that Rowasa is effective in all types of ulcerative colitis...when such has not been demonstrated by substantial evidence." A batch of the drug was later recalled by its maker for production flaws. Which doesn't mean that Tina Phifer knew more about medicine or science than the doctors at Montefiore. But it does indicate that just being a medical doctor doesn't bestow flawless discernment such that the law should force your decisions on parents.

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Dissatisfied with her daughter's course of treatment, Phifer tried to take Amkia out of Montefiore in order, she says, to find her a more compatible doctor. Montefiore officials responded by calling in New York City's Administration for Children's Services. ACS officials decided that Phifer's attempt to seek a second opinion constituted a failure to provide appropriate medical care, punishable by loss of custody. Young Amkia was taken away from her mother and spent two years in a series of foster homes.

I spoke to Amkia, now 12, by phone in August. Foster "homes" was a misnomer, the intense and articulate Amkia says. "I don't refer to them as homes: they were foster *houses*. I don't feel any of the foster people were warm or nice, in terms of their being any sort of rapport between the foster person and me. Many of them had rats and roaches and mice. Basically, all of the foster people were just in it for the money."

Amkia was moved to six different homes in the two years, rarely being told why she was moved. She was allowed to see her

mother for only one hour a week in supervised meetings. A social worker sat next to the mother and daughter, ordering them to speak up so she could hear every sentimental word they exchanged. Amkia, formerly homeschooled, was enrolled in public schools where, she says, she was frequently picked on and beaten up. "I learned more when my mother homeschooled me," Amkia says. "I never got a chance to have my mind stimulated [in the schools]." Her homeschooling became an issue in family court hearings about custody; Phifer was accused of "educational neglect" for not sending her daughter to New York City public schools.

After you talk to Amkia, the law's presumption that this bright and aware human being should not be able to decide for herself where she wanted to live seems especially absurd. But she was not allowed to speak for herself in family court hearings. She had an assigned law guardian who, Amkia says, "never expressed my views, never told the judge that Amkia stated she wants to go home."

During her two years in familial exile, Amkia's ulcerative colitis, a condition that may be aggravated by stress, continued to act up. In May, after two years of fighting in family court, Amkia was allowed to live with her mother again on a trial basis, with biweekly visits from child protection authorities. Under her mother's care, Amkia is receiving Imuran, an immunosuppressive drug that often mitigates the symptoms of colitis, a mysterious disease for which there is a wide range of possible remedies, none of them surefire, and no cure. Because of what she considers unfair treatment by both Montefiore and state authorities, Phifer has filed lawsuits against them both.

Robert Beard was the general counsel for the International Coalition for Medical Justice, the group that represented Pam Anderson in her battles with the Terre Haute CPS and helped her maintain custody of her son Anthony. He also worked in state departments of social services for 15 years. "We run into problems when public health decisions are made in a political climate," he tells me. "People might not necessarily trust government, but they do tend to trust *medicine*. It's something in government social service work that we all need to be on the alert for. It's too easy to think that we know everything that needs to be known because we are the state and we're right."

It's impossible to know with any precision how often state or medical authorities step in to deny parental rights to make medical decisions for their children. The defunct ICMJ was the only national organization specifically dedicated to the issue. But more and more cases seem to be piling up. Former ICMJ board member David Rasnick, a retired pharmaceutical drug developer, says that he hears about cases all the time. He says "it's usually poor parents who are maybe used to thinking they have to do what doctors tell them, and don't have the resources to fight anyway." But as the stories recounted here suggest, it seems that even poor or socially marginalized parents are finding the will to fight back.

Fifty years ago, would a single black mother like Pam Anderson have had any support, much less the nerve, to stand up to the doctors, social workers, and cops who wanted her son to take a potential poison because of their assumptions about blacks and drugs? The arrogance of doctors can be hard enough to fight; when they can call in state agents, it gets even harder.

"Ritalin solved the problem for the school," says Jill Carroll, "but the side effects were too much. Kyle hardly slept or ate."

It's not easy to pinpoint one reason why these cases of parents fighting the medical state are happening more frequently, but one thread common to all these stories is information. Kathleen Tyson was familiar with arguments against AZT through the Internet; Pam Anderson's aunt was familiar with ICMJ through something she'd seen on TV; the Carrolls were strengthened in their objections to Ritalin when early local news accounts of their troubles brought phone calls from other parents. The more a citizen is able to know and learn, the more likely it is that he or she will have the will to argue with authority. Fortunately, information is increasingly decentralized and accessible, from hundreds of cable channels to thousands of specialty magazines to the cornucopia of the Internet.

And when someone's kids are involved, the motivation to fight back is especially strong. "I've met these mothers, and one thing I'd never want to do is come between a mother and her child," Rasnick says. "They want what's best for their kids, and they initially assume that a doctor is going to give them the best advice and do what's best for the kids. But if they see the kids getting worse instead of better, or they think what the doctor wants could be dangerous, they'll do whatever they have to that they think is best for their children." ◆

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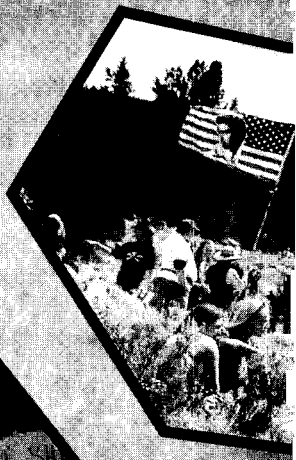


Me to Your Leader

By Sam MacDonald

PHOTOS: AARON ROSS

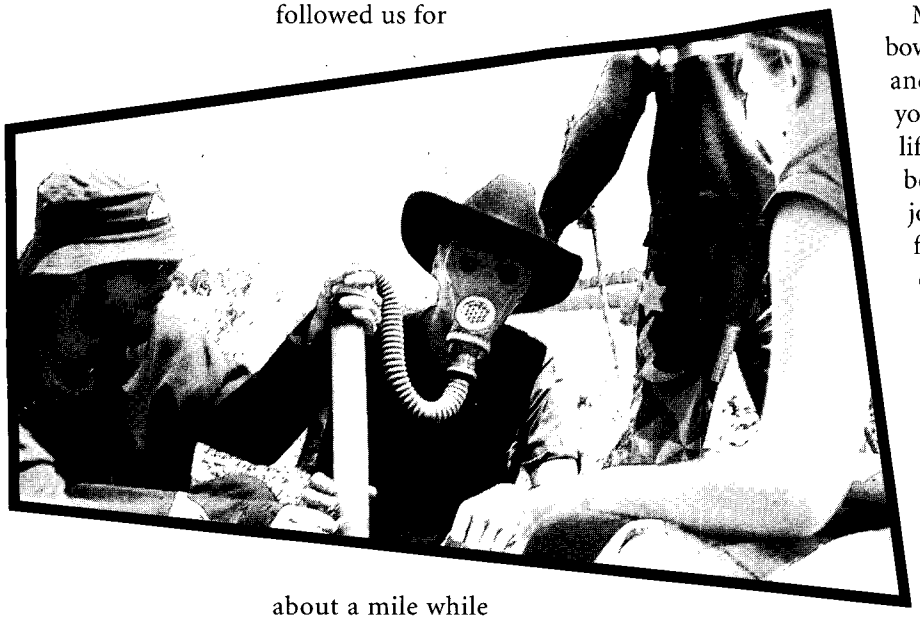
A huge annual gathering of hippies freaks out the National Forest Service

It was 4 a.m., we were more than 300 miles from the Gathering, and the police were already hot on our trail.

Not that they could have missed us. As three tired, unshaven men struggling over the Montana mountains at 45 miles per hour in a 1969 Volkswagen bus, we meant only one thing to the authorities sworn to protect the public from the Rainbow Family Gathering of Light. *Hippies.* Worse: hippies without permits, a combination that put The Man in a particularly grumpy state of mind.

REPRODUCTION

The Montana State Highway Patrol car blazed past us going up the hill, and then the officer decided to give us another look. He slowed to a crawl, becoming the first and only motorist our bus passed on the entire cross-country odyssey. He settled into tailgating position and followed us for about a mile while we scrambled to remember whether we were carrying any illegal substances. Tiring of that, he rolled up beside us and tried to get a view inside, but eventually gave up the inspection and tore off, up the steep grade.



He was only the first of many law enforcement officials who would give us a closer look over the following week.

Every Fourth of July, the Rainbow Gathering draws up to 30,000 of the strangest people in the world to a different national forest each year. Most stay a few days, while others come weeks ahead and stay even longer. The week-long "prayer for world peace" includes aging hippies, drug-addled teen runaways, Hare Krishnas, and mainstream onlookers hungry for a taste of the free-love '60s.

Almost all the Rainbows share an anti-authoritarian streak that flies in the face of the National Forest Service's attempts to control the Gathering. Federal law decrees that any group larger than 75 must obtain a permit before assembling on National Forest property. Unlike the organizers of other high-profile countercultural events, such as Burning Man, the Rainbows have always refused, even when facing heavy fines and jail time.

This time was no different. Lawless, unplanned, and almost wholly free of traditional leadership, the 28th annual Gathering was staged in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in southwestern Montana, much to the chagrin of a special federal police unit designed to press the Rainbows into submission. What's more, the estimated 23,000 campers—a big city by Montana standards—managed to pull this off in a harsh physical environment with almost no facilities.

Mad Mike, 21, is typical of many young Rainbows. While many older attendees have families and full-time jobs in the outside world, the younger generation tends to live the Rainbow life all year. A New Orleans native, Mike has been bumping from city to city, taking odd jobs whenever possible, living on the streets for over a year. He hitchhiked to the Gathering with the clothes on his back, a tent, a blanket, and his guitar. He had no money, no food, and no means to earn either. Still, sitting on the main path strumming his instrument, he seemed healthy and happy to be with the Rainbows.

"Here, the Christians get along," he told us. "The Krishnas get along. Everybody gets along. Everybody smiles and helps people out. When you're walking down the path at night, you're not scared."

Mike had good reason to be pleased. Not only was he getting free meals at the community kitchens, but he had made a niche for himself as the Heady Nugget Guy.

On his first day at the Gathering, Mike composed a ditty on his guitar, a catchy little tune with the constant refrain, "Who's got my heady nuggets? Who's got my heady nuggets? Who's got my heady nuggets for me?" ("Heady nuggets," Mike explained, means particularly good marijuana.) About half the people at the Gathering were humming his tune by the second day, and most of them did indeed have some heady nuggets for their favorite new composer. People constantly stopped to sit on the path and congratulate him on the song. They almost invariably shared a bowl of their finest marijuana in the process.

Mike went on to compose another song, called "Hippie Princess," for the rare moments when he had managed to accumulate a pocketful of heady nuggets. Its lyrics begged various females to "let me feel your aura and I'll load your bong." He would not comment on the effectiveness of this effort.

"I definitely think about making money in a real job, but I don't know," Mike mused. "I think I'll see how easy it is to follow these guys around for awhile."

Mad Mike was not alone. Buzz, 28, had hitched in from Denver with Freedom, 19.

"We came here with nothing but the clothes on our backs—nothing," Buzz said. "Within two days

we had a phat tent, and someone said they would kick us a sleeping bag when they leave." The pair scored the gear by sitting on the path, asking passers-by if they could "spare any warmth."

Many older Rainbows refer to people like Buzz and Freedom as "Drainbows"—campers who contribute little to the common cause but act as a drain on the limited supply of food, water, and drugs. Still, the Gathering survives without any centralized authority to spur the free riders to action. Everyone who is hungry gets fed, and everyone in need of heady nuggets finds plenty along the way.

The planning process for the 2000 event began at the 1999 Gathering, in Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest. Hippies hunkered around campfires tossed out ideas for the new venue: Vermont, Arizona, Utah. All 19,000 of them left without a clear sense of where this year's Gathering would be. So how did they all end up in the same Montana meadow just 12 months later?

The answer to that question lies at the heart of the Rainbow experience. The Forest Service contends that an established group of Rainbows, usually called "focalizers," is the de facto Rainbow organization, deciding where and how the Gatherings should be conducted.

The Forest Service needs the Rainbows to have leaders. Otherwise, there would be no one to cite for refusing to sign the permit, unless it called in the National Guard to cite all 23,000 attendees. The feds have often cited a few people at past events, usually leading to fines of less than $100. But they seem to be losing patience. In Erie, Pennsylvania, last June, U.S. District Judge Maurice B. Cohill Jr. sentenced three Rainbows cited at last year's gathering to one month in jail; he also tacked on some hefty fines. "While the 'mouse that roared' syndrome sometimes has the appeal of tweaking the authorities on the nose," Cohill said in his decision, "we hope that the time to stop has finally arrived."

The feds cited three more campers for failing to sign permits this year. They were scheduled to appear in federal court in Montana in December.

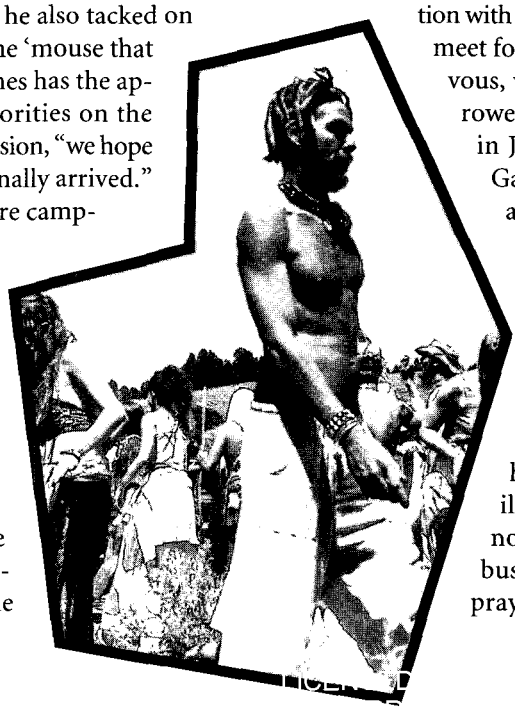
It's hard to say why the Forest Service chose to cite these particular people, or why it did not choose more. *The Rainbow Guide*, the "unofficial" Rainbow handbook distributed free at the Gathering, lists the names and addresses of 24 individuals and organizations that call themselves focalizers, and about 400 more who readily admit to being Rainbows. Still, only three people received citations. None were listed as focalizers.

The Rainbows' legal defense usually comes in two parts. First, they say the permit requirement violates their constitutional right to assemble freely. Second, they say that since the group has no leader, no one is authorized to speak for it or to sign any permits in its name.

The Rainbows claim they have no formal organization and no leaders, that the entire event is nothing more than a "tribal anarchy" run through spontaneous order. According to the *Guide*, "Our Gatherings are open to all peaceful people. There is no membership, no administration. There are no leaders. No one is turned away. Any non-violent person with a belly button is welcome. You are a Rainbow by simply deciding that you are one, and your voice is equal to that of any other Rainbow, be it your 1st Gathering or your 20th."

There is, indeed, no central Rainbow authority in any traditional sense. The core group consists of clans scattered throughout the world. Rainbows in New York City meet weekly for potluck dinners and drum circles in area parks, and similar gatherings take place in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other cities. Following the national event in Montana, regional gatherings were planned for Colorado and Alaska. *The Rainbow Guide* lists addresses in at least 10 foreign countries.

The national gathering unites all these clans for a week. Information about dates and locations spreads through the loose web of "scouts" and focalizers. According to *The Rainbow Guide*, experienced scouts scour the nation for appropriate sites throughout the year, sharing information with regional focalizers. Then they meet for a Spring Scouting Rendezvous, where their choices are narrowed. Later—usually sometime in June, just weeks before the Gathering—focalizers meet to announce the location and distribute the information through hotlines and, more recently, Web sites.



Becoming a focalizer or a scout is about the easiest thing in the world to do. At the Gathering, all you have to do is attend the Family Council meeting at high noon, where major Rainbow business is conducted through prayer and consensus building.

"Here, the Christians get along," Mad Mike says. "The Krishnas get along. Everybody gets along. Everybody smiles and helps people out. When you're walking down the path at night, you're not scared."

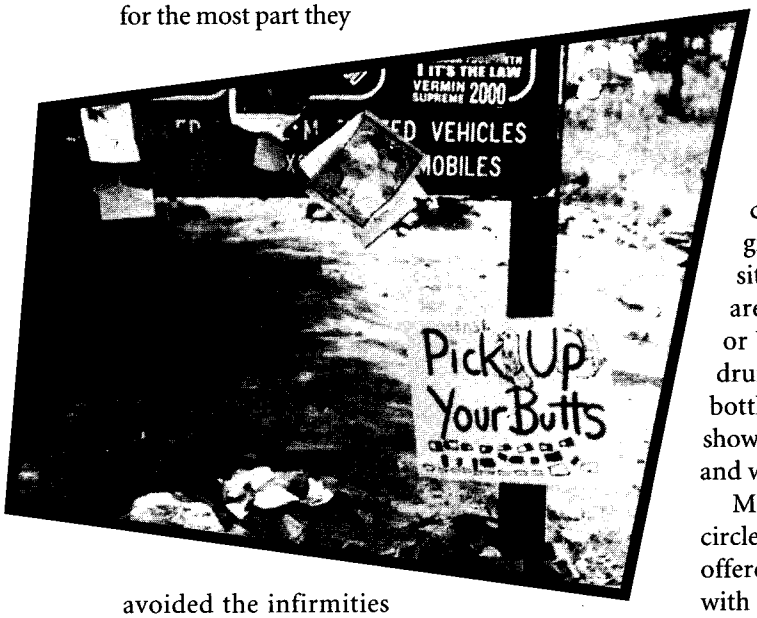
Volunteer for something, and before you know it you're a focalizer.

Consider Owl, the fellow manning this year's Info Center—a makeshift lean-to with a map of the site, a message board, and various handouts. He was the focalizer "in charge" of sanitation. How did he get the job?

Owl, who works as a consultant for a home security company, has been attending national and regional gatherings since 1985. One year, concerned about the cleanliness of the hand-dug "shitter" trenches, he brought about $400 worth of sanitation equipment along with him.

"No one told me to," he told us. "I just saw something I thought needed to get done, so I brought it."

Owl's knowledge of sanitation was useful, and people began consulting with him about the best way to dig the shitters. He referred to himself as the "head of sanitation." Which he probably is. But that is not to say that he is actually in charge of anything. He was never elected or appointed to an official position. He has no authority to tell people where to dig a latrine. He does not dig them all himself. Still, the trenches got dug, people used them, and for the most part they avoided the infirmities one might expect when 23,000 marijuana aficionados eat, sleep, and shit in the same general area for an extended period of time.



While Owl seemed to be the man who knew the most about sanitation, digging the slit trenches was a community responsibility. A sign at the Info Center encouraged the volunteer spirit: "Need something to do? Ask for someone with a shovel. Dig a shitter." Anyone who didn't know how would be referred to Owl or another Rainbow who knew.

Surprisingly, despite the free love and easy drugs on hand to occupy everyone's time, volunteers surfaced to dig whenever the need arose.

According to Owl, the authorities dislike the Gathering because they can't control the people involved or take any profits off the top. "They hate it because we are not building a stadium, like professional sports," he explained. "There is no transfer of funds. There is no way the government can tax us." There is no Rainbow Family organization, he stressed. "None of us comes here as part of the Rainbow Family. We come out as individuals. It just so happens that we have no official legal standing as an organization, and the police can't stand that."

Owl was interrupted by a young man who stopped to ask for trash bags. He was heading out of the Gathering and planned to pick up garbage on the way. At first, Owl thought he'd have to send the kid away empty-handed, but then he looked around the lean-to and found a few bags that someone had donated to the cause.

And so it goes with Rainbow focalizers. Someone has to guide the event. In the case of sanitation, Owl is widely considered something of a shitter guru. Still, he isn't a leader—not in the usual sense of the word. He just saw something that needed to be done, and he did it.

In this informal manner, 23,000 bellies were regularly filled, largely through neighborhood kitchens that sprang up around the site and fed the masses for free. The kitchens, often affiliated with various clans from around the country, operated almost continuously. Offerings included bread and granola baked in mud ovens constructed on site. Unlike Burning Man, where participants are expected to haul in everything they need, or Woodstock '99, where promoters charged drunken, dehydrated teenagers $4 or more for bottles of water, the Gathering allows people to show up with nothing but the shirts on their backs and walk away a few pounds heavier.

Merry Sunshine, operated away from the main circle of activity, was one of the few kitchens that offered meat. It also provided any and all takers with clean drinking water—a hot commodity in Montana, where cows grazing on National Forest land have had the polluting effect you'd expect. Perhaps even more popular was the kitchen's makeshift solar shower.

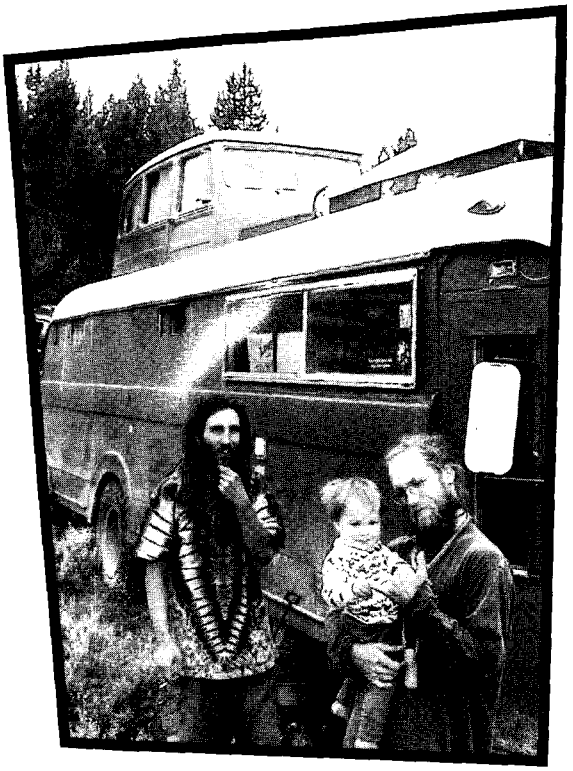
NZANE, an energetic, bearded man in a wheelchair—he had lost a leg, and almost lost an arm, in a motorcycle accident—was a cook at Merry Sunshine. According to him, putting the whole operation together, counting food, equipment, and other supplies, probably cost about $15,000.

Labor, on the other hand, was free. After eating at the kitchen, my photographer went to work washing dishes. Later, he volunteered to dam a stream to make it easier to fetch shower water. A Rainbow from Amsterdam who stopped by for water ended up taking over dish duty, and an exceptionally dirty young man walking along the trail gathered firewood for the kitchen while waiting for his turn in the shower. It was impossible to tell who actually came with the kitchen and who had stopped by to help.

"There's no organization here," admitted NZANE. "It's just whoever picks up the ball and runs with it. Someone always seems to do it."

While Merry Sunshine did offer food free for the taking, the kitchen did not participate in the Gathering's largest daily spectacle: dinner in the Main Circle. Every day around twilight, thousands of hungry Rainbows would gather in the meadow and arrange themselves in concentric circles. After a series of messages and some group meditation, volunteers from the various kitchens would arrive with coolers full of their finest offerings, distributing the free food to everyone sitting in the circle.

While the kitchens provided most of the food themselves, the Rainbows also organized a "magic hat" parade, a small band of still more volunteers that tramped around the circle singing the magic hat song while everyone but the Drainbows donated what they could to the cause. The money was then handled by a team of at least five respected Rainbow elders, who spent it on any needed supplies. They distributed the rest to the participating kitchens to make sure there would be food the following day.



While the Rainbows do an impressive job of guiding their anarchic community through the various hardships of living outdoors, the going isn't always smooth.

First, the participants show a strong aversion to the use of money. On my first day at the Gathering, I made my way to the large "trading village" in the hope of scoring a trinket to impress my own hippie princess back home. The large circle included scores of Rainbows displaying everything from beads and handmade crafts to psychedelic mushrooms and rolling papers.

It soon became clear that no one was interested in my money. Trying to buy a bowl from a teenage girl, I asked what she was hoping to trade. When she told me she needed gas money to get home, I jumped at the opportunity. She sneered at my useless wad of bills. "Look man," she said, "I really try to keep money out of the trade." Instead, she was hoping to trade with people willing to siphon fuel directly out of their cars.

After several similar encounters, I realized that the closest thing to money at the Rainbow Gathering was green of another sort: marijuana. Weed was acceptable as a trade in almost any circumstance—an informal medium of exchange. Unfortunately, we didn't have any, so we had to go to A-Camp.

A-Camp was the only place at the Gathering where alcohol was widely accepted. Rainbows discourage its use but established the enclave because some members are alcoholics and can't go long without a drink. It was also, we were told, the only place where money was seen as an acceptable marker of value.

So off we trudged, but only grudgingly. On the way into the Gathering, we had walked by A-Camp at about 6 a.m. The serious alcoholics on hand were either still or already drunk. A fight had broken out over an offensive remark one Rainbow had made about Guatemala: Someone sent his pit bull after the offender, and the entire encampment, including at least 50 people, was in an uproar for 20 minutes. The ubiquitous fighting made it clear that America's only legal intoxicant is probably its most disruptive.

Still, we persevered. We made our way back to the bus and fetched a 12-pack of beer and a bottle of single malt we had in reserve. That and a few good old American dollars landed us a sizable sack of decent-looking marijuana.

We then hiked a mile back to the trading circle,

According to Owl, the authorities dislike the Gathering because they can't control the people involved or take any profits off the top. "There is no transfer of funds. There is no way the government can tax us."

where we finally had some acceptable bait for trading. I had no problem landing myself a handmade hippie purse and a few other trinkets for the folks back home. While the ladder of transactions worked and the notion of smokable currency did appeal to my deviant nature, the inefficiency of the process was a lesson in the value and convenience of paper money.

The Rainbows also had occasional problems dealing with the mass of people crowding the paths. One night at dinner, the concentric circles simply failed to materialize. With no one in charge, it was impossible to effectively direct the largely drug-muddled crowd into compliance. Sitting in an unfortunate spot, we watched as the food reached everyone but those of us stuck on the outside.

But for the most part, the Rainbows' nonsystem worked. No one starved, and no one died of exposure in the chilly Montana nights. That is an admirable accomplishment for 23,000 hippies who strike fear and loathing in the hearts of the National Forest Service.

The Forest Service's National Incident Management Team usually deals with large-scale emergencies, such as raging forest fires. It is also the entity responsible for dealing with the Rainbow Gathering, which the federal government obviously views as a national incident.

Based at the Dillon Middle School about an hour away from the Gathering, the team of about 40 officers coordinated law enforcement's response to the event. Its tactics included aerial flyovers, mounted patrols through the Gathering, increased state and local patrols on area roads, and, as mentioned, citing a few Rainbows for failing to sign the required permit. According to Sharon Sweeney, an information officer stationed temporarily in Dillon, the federal government allocated $400,000 to the Rainbow policing effort.

Kevin Kennedy, another officer on the scene, said the event went off with few major incidents. "It's actually been pretty smooth," he said. "We've had a pretty strong law enforcement presence because of the permit issue." The biggest offenses Kennedy reported were a man caught with 500 hits of LSD and a drunken A-Camper who attempted to run over his girlfriend with his truck during a fight.

According to National Forest Service statistics, there were a total of 42 felony arrests, 136 misdemeanor arrests, 23 warrants served, 580 citations, and 931 warnings at the Rainbow site between June 6 and July 7. Of those, 162 were drug-related, while 881 involved traffic and vehicles; 21 related to "nudity." Authorities also handled five natal incidents (births or labor), 13 ambulance transports, and 52 hospital visits.

Sweeney stressed that the Forest Service's major concern is environmental impact. "The site is a mess," she said. "We don't know what long-term impacts the slit trenches will have. There are 23,000 people out there trampling a delicate meadow area. We're talking about a really short growing season here. We don't know how long it will take the area to recover."

Lurking behind those concerns, though, is another issue: the Rainbows' refusal to sign the required permit. "If they had a permit we could work with them to select a site that could handle that many people," said Buck Feist, another information officer based temporarily in Dillon for the Gathering. The permit procedure is free, Feist said, and the decision to grant it or not is in no way based on the cultural or religious views of the people applying—indeed, Feist adds, the Forest Service considers large groups such as the Rainbows an "appropriate use." Asked if there was a National Forest site anywhere in the country that would be acceptable for a crowd as large as the Rainbow Family, Feist said he didn't know. "They haven't applied for a permit, so we haven't entered into that discussion."

Feist denied the Rainbows' claim that the permit requirement violates their constitutional right to assemble. He also rejected the possibility that the Rainbows could work with the Forest Service to select a more environmentally acceptable site but still refuse to sign a permit on constitutional grounds. "There is a process," he said. "We can't work with them until they sign the permit."

So on what grounds were some people picked out for citations while most were not? "These were

folks who seemed to be in more of a leadership role," Sweeney said. "Granted, there is no one leader."

And if there were, he or she wouldn't necessarily be facing charges. "I went to the main council at the gathering for the first time since 1992 this year," said Barry "Plunker" Adams, a 55-year-old migrant ranch hand and one of the three Rainbows charged this year for gathering without a permit. "I haven't been that involved in the gathering for years and years. I did a little this year, and I did help clean up like I do every year. What the government did was hand a ticket to a volunteer janitor."

Neither Feist nor Sweeney could point to a single specific long-term negative environmental impact suffered at any of the previous 27 Rainbow Gatherings. The worst they could recall was a widespread breakout of a gastrointestinal disease after a meeting in North Carolina. Since the National Incident Management Team had been involved in only the last three national events, Sweeney said, they lack sufficient data to make any conclusions.

On the other hand, the Rainbows proudly display the final impact studies conducted by the Forest Service after each Gathering. Scores of hardcore Rainbows stay behind each year to pick up trash, reseed trampled ground, bury latrines, and conduct other hard work, such as corralling abandoned dogs. The federal impact studies are designed to study the effectiveness of the cleanup crew and gauge the long-term environmental impact of each Gathering. Last year's study concluded that "there will be minimal long-term negative resource impacts" to the site. "One Heritage site was damaged during the event," it noted. "All other resource impacts have been adequately addressed, mitigated or rehabilitated."

This year's study hasn't been completed, but Bill Fox, head of the Forest Service team that monitors the Rainbows, said there have been some problems. "Cleanup of the garbage has been OK, but there is a lot of compacted soil," he said. "There were some slit trenches that were not properly filled, and there were a lot of trails that were not completely obliterated. I think the forest is very upset over that." According to Fox, the basic geographical realities of Beaverhead-Deerlodge, such as its hard soil and short growing season, made it a particularly difficult area to restore. And that, he argued, is why the Rainbows should sign the permit and cooperate with the authorities to select more appropriate sites in the future.

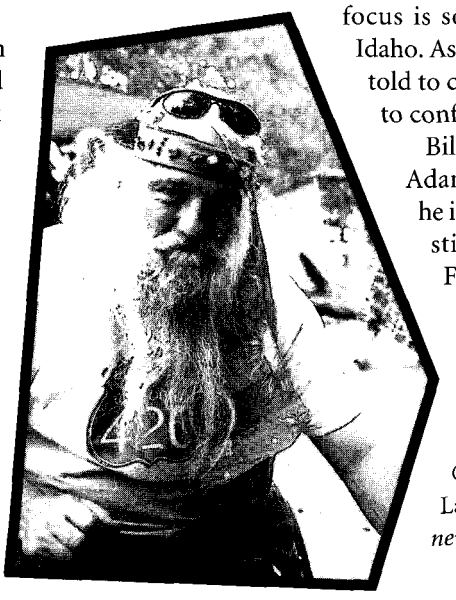
But according to Barry Adams, it's the Forest Service that won't cooperate. "I tried this year to do my best to work with the Forest Service," he said. "I wanted to act in a Good Samaritan relationship. I care about this forest. I'm a native Montanan. But Bill Fox told me there would be no talking to anybody. He told me no one would talk to anybody until a permit was signed." Adams said he invited officials to participate in the consensus-building councils that guide the Rainbow tribes, but they refused. "They could work this out by accepting the process we use, but they have chosen not to do that," he said. "We don't have a process that they recognize, but we have a process. If they would have come out and sat at the council, we might not have gotten full consensus, but we would have gotten an operation plan."

Fox denied that Adams or any other Rainbows made such conciliatory overtures. "I think that in Barry's mind he might think he did that, but he did not get in touch with the forest supervisor," he said. "He is not being truthful on that issue." Either way, he added, no talks could have taken place before someone signed on the dotted line for the Rainbows. "The regulations say you have to have a permit," he said. "We would have been violating our own policy."

The issue is now in the hands of the federal court. Adams and the other two Rainbows each face possible jail time and a $5,000 fine. The larger dispute, meanwhile, shows no signs of disappearing.

Volunteer scouts are already searching the country for next year's site. According to an unofficial Rainbow Web site (welcomehome.org), the focus is somewhere in Washington or Idaho. As always, all interested parties are told to check back sometime next June to confirm the actual place.

Bill Fox said he'll be there. Barry Adams said he will too—as long as he isn't in jail. Adams added that he still won't put his name on the Forest Service permit. Ever. And Fox said he'll keep pressuring the Rainbows until someone signs. ®



Sam MacDonald (SMacdon921@aol.com) is a reporter for the Laurel Leader, *a community newspaper in Laurel, Maryland.*

The serious alcoholics on hand were either still or already drunk. A fight had broken out over an offensive remark one Rainbow had made about Guatemala: Someone sent his pit bull after the offender. America's only legal intoxicant is probably the most disruptive.

Room to Grow

What's so bad about the suburbs?

By Sam Staley

Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream, by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, New York: North Point Press, 290 pages, $30

The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Property Value in Disney's New Town, by Andrew Ross, New York: Ballantine Books, 340 pages, $25.95

Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened, by Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, New York: Basic Books, 298 pages, $27.50

Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk are the husband-and-wife team that pioneered the most influential urban planning movement of the past 20 years, the so-called New Urbanism. From its start in the early 1980s in the Florida Panhandle resort town of Seaside, their design movement has blossomed into a self-styled revolution, one that has won the hearts and minds of thousands of planners, developers, and elected officials. During the Clinton years, both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development embraced New Urbanist principles; so have regional plan-

SUSAN SANFORD

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ning agencies from Portland to Fort Worth.

In an era when *development* has become a bad word, the New Urbanism is about more than neighborhood design, as *Suburban Nation*—the new book by Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and planner Jeff Speck—makes clear. "Americans have been building a national landscape that is largely devoid of places worth caring about," it proclaims. "You are against growth, because you believe that it will make your life worse. And you are correct in that belief."

But the authors aren't really against growth per se. They're just against growth that they didn't design, or that isn't rooted in their principles. At first their rhetoric seems liberating, as they chastise the officials who have prescribed low-density, single-use development through restrictive zoning codes. ("The problem," they write, "is that one cannot easily build Charleston [South Carolina] anymore, because it is against the law.") But the reader quickly learns that for Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, choice is only good when people choose New Urbanist ideas about growth and planning.

For the authors, the problem with American cities and suburbs is what we might call *privatism.* Subdivisions lack the public civic centers that were central to traditional neighborhoods, while large, private spaces proliferate. The trio's solution is detailed public regulation, an approach that leaves little room for spontaneity or evolution. "To truly improve quality of life," they write, "the planning codes must define open space with the same degree of precision and concern that they now apply to the design of parking lots." At a minimum, this means dictating the size of yards, the physical position of houses on lots, the type and variety of facades, and site-specific densities.

The result is a paradox: The authors want to take a problem they believe was fundamentally caused by politics, and solve it with...more politics. To them, the problem isn't the rule of experts—it's that the wrong experts have been in charge.

Suburban Nation makes its arguments within an exclusively political and architectural framework, virtually ignoring private real estate markets and the complex interactions between developers and planning boards. For these writers, housing and communities are developed first and foremost according to local codes. Politi-

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cians and regulators determine a community's physical design, not developers, builders, or consumers working through the property market.

This account leaves out a great deal. While zoning may prescribe specific densities, it also provides for some flexibility, as with planned unit developments. These are, in effect, negotiated agreements in which planning boards allow companies to develop housing that is largely independent of local codes. Developers often shy away from planned unit developments because of their tremendous up-front political and financial costs: The deliberations are often politically charged, and the projects are scrutinized intensely by both planners and citizens. Nonetheless, people will pay more for a house with features they want, which may include more public open space and less private yard. So if the local housing market is strong—if the potential revenues are higher than the potential political costs—planned unit developments and other alternatives to the standard code may flourish.

This isn't the only thing that *Suburban Nation* fails to consider. There have been many critiques of the New Urbanism, including dozens of peer-reviewed studies that call many of its basic premises into question. In 1997, for example, University of Southern California economists Peter Gordon and Harry Richardson questioned many of the basic principles underlying "neotraditional" planning in a wide-ranging and frequently cited survey published in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, the planning profession's premier scholarly journal. In the same issue of the journal, planner Michael Southworth questioned the viability of neotraditional planning after analyzing two projects that were up and running.

Suburban Nation essentially ignores such critiques, leaving important issues unaddressed and significant questions unanswered. If market forces are important in driving planning and zoning decisions —a point convincingly demonstrated by the academic literature in real estate economics—a critical gap emerges between the "problems" the authors identify and the solutions they promote. Specifically, how does the New Urbanism accommodate market forces?

The short answer, of course, is that it doesn't: For New Urban theorists, city design should not be subject to the whims of the market. But what if regional and state governments don't always act in the best interests of their citizens? What if more comprehensive planning weakens governmental accountability, giving special interests even more power?

These issues aren't just theoretical. The authors are calling for a radical increase in government control over land development and, ultimately, over the physical dimensions of neighborhoods. Most of this power, they argue, would have to be exercised on the state level: The federal government is too distant, local governments are too myopic, and regional governments simply do not exist in a meaningful sense. Thus, "Whether it is purchasing land for conservation, mandating urban boundaries, or restricting low-density development, state leadership is needed to foster awareness and to sponsor smart growth." Not that the authors shy from demanding more from Washington as well: They want a larger federal initiative to fund public transit, using funding requirements to "regulate urban design within a half-mile radius of all new stations." If the public interest model of government doesn't hold up, such prescriptions are simplistic and naive.

It's residents who create communities, not architects or planners. Urban designers can certainly facilitate community building, but they can't dictate it.

The problems ignored by the authors of *Suburban Nation* are compounded in the real world, a fact that becomes painfully obvious in Andrew Ross' *Celebration Chronicles*—a book that tells what happens when New Urbanist principles are applied to real people, real families, real developers, and a real community. Ross relates the birthing pains of Celebration, another New Urbanist town in Florida—one not mandated by regulations but built privately, from the ground up, by The Celebration Company, a subsidiary of the entertainment giant Disney. Ross, director of the American Studies Program at New York University and a self-proclaimed radical academic, considers himself a New Urban fellow traveler. He lived in Celebration from September 1997 to August 1998 and revisited the town in early 1999, before his book went to press. He interviewed dozens of residents and participated in community forums, living in an apartment in Celebration's downtown.

So what did he find? A mess. Interestingly, the mess was not a product of poor design: Few communities have been designed with as much care and attention to detail as Celebration. The mess was a natural outgrowth of the problems any new community faces. Disney bid out construction of the new homes to just two companies, and despite the vast resources the winning bidders mustered, they had little experience building in communities like Celebration—or, for that matter, in Florida. Many houses were not completed on time, and some moving vans arrived without a house to move into. Much of the community infrastructure, including the school, was also behind schedule.

Many residents were attracted to Celebration because of the Disney connection, expecting the town to be as customer-friendly and efficient as Walt Disney World. Instead, the town acted like a town, not a corporation, with all the petty conflicts, dashed expectations, naive hopes, colorful characters, and local politics that entails. From the beginning, persistent rumors questioned Disney's commitment to the project. If Disney pulled out, many feared, the town and its experimental design would collapse.

In Celebration, as in most cities, officials tried to gloss over politically difficult problems: "Hefty doses of boosterism were administered through [the town manager's] monthly newsletters and those

sent out by...[the] director of the nonprofit Celebration Foundation," writes Ross. Town meetings were held for "keeping up morale and stoking the flames of volunteerism." After a few months, these had become what most community meetings are: small gatherings of a few key city officials and active residents—hardly the broad-based participatory democracy envisioned by the city's designers.

Nowhere were the conflicts over the community's identity and direction more evident than in the very public, very divisive debate over the community school. Many families were thrown for a loop when they found that The Celebration Company had envisioned a "progressive" school and curriculum.

The school is organized for "multi-age instruction," with grades combined into levels. (Upper 3, for example, includes grades 8 and 9.) The classrooms are called "nurturing neighborhoods," and teachers are "learning leaders." The classrooms are 6,000-square-foot spaces, and all the furniture is movable. "A central 'hearth area,' evocative of the family living room and large enough to congregate all 100-plus students, is furnished with couches, often facing each other like a hotel lobby." Textbooks are rarely used, computer terminals are everywhere, and team teaching is emphasized. Grades are discouraged, along with desks, period bells, daily schedules, report cards, and other "ritual features of traditional education."

The teachers, unsurprisingly, tended to be liberal, if not hard left. One provocative social studies instructor delighted in shaking up her complacent high school–age students by teaching '60s-style social activism, at one point declaring that "of all the rights, the most important is 'the right of the governed to start a revolution.'" The students were then assigned four weeks to develop their own "quiet revolution" as part of a "service-learning project."

The school, Ross observes almost matter-of-factly, was the center of conflict in the budding new town. Surprise! Here, Ross' politics get the better of him: Committed to what he considers progressive education, he has little sympathy for those parents who feel otherwise. "From what I could see," he observes critically, "Celebration was a public school

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besieged by parents' consumer-driven demands for a private school education." The upshot of Ross' analysis is that parents should leave schools to the "professionals"—the teachers and administrators who (he presumes) know what they're doing. As it happens, many of Celebration's parents did approach the school this way—until they found their kids weren't getting the kind or quality of education they wanted.

Ross' ideological perspective drives him to see power relationships as the almost exclusive source of the new town's conflicts. The relationship with Disney does make the Celebration story more interesting, and it certainly provides fodder for Ross' quasi-Marxist interpretations. But this view is incomplete. True, the Disney connection gave the town a few quirks other developments lack—marketing chutzpah, a consumer-friendly reputation, and proximity to one of the nation's premier entertainment complexes. The short time frame for building and the support of a large, well-financed corporation distinguishes it from most modern subdivisions, but not from such contemporary new towns as Sommerlin in Las Vegas, or even such predecessors as Reston, Virginia, and Columbia, Maryland. Step back a little, and it becomes obvious that Celebration is going through the growing pains almost any new community experiences.

For proof, read *Picture Windows*, Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen's study of how the modern suburb emerged as a response to the affordable housing needs of working-class families after World War II. Baxandall and Ewen teach at the State University of New York at Westbury (on Long Island, although they live in Manhattan); like Ross, they lean leftward in their politics, though their analysis is not nearly as Marxist in orientation and tone.

While Ross' project was born out of an almost pure intellectual curiosity, Baxandall and Ewen were inspired by a more mundane concern. The students they taught were not the vacuous, soulless, mindless suburbanites pilloried in *Suburban Nation* and such predecessor tracts as James Howard Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere* and Richard Moe's *Changing Places*. Instead, they "led lives as intricate as any urban dweller." So what kind of environment *did* they come from?

This inquiry resulted in an unusually dynamic and perceptive history of urban policy through the lens of the first suburban pioneers. Baxandall and Ewen note that contrary to the New Urbanists and many other anti-suburban writers, most urban reform and planning agendas in the early and mid-20th century called for low-density, semi-rural lifestyles. "The idea of suburbia," they write, "was central to visionaries, planners, and socially conscious architects who began to imagine a new America." The goal was to enhance the working class' quality of life.

When postwar suburbia arrived, this goal was joined to another: profit. William Levitt bought 3,500 acres on Long Island and launched a revolution in housing. With help from the Federal Housing Administration and the "largest line of credit ever offered to a privately owned corporation by the Bank of Manhattan," Levitt did what no one thought possible: mass-produce affordable housing. Initially, his homes sold for $7,500 each. In subsequent years, as he tinkered with the design and added amenities, prices climbed to almost $8,000, still an extraordinarily low price at the time.

The biggest obstacles Levitt faced were the local building codes, especially many Long Island communities' requirement that all new housing include basements—a rule that alone would have raised the cost of a new home by more than 10 percent. This law was a holdover from earlier construction designs that required basements for boilers and furnaces; the need could be eliminated through radiant heating on concrete slabs. Levitt lobbied hard, and ultimately successfully, against the mandate. He also turned homebuilding into an assembly line process, thus reducing the amount of skilled labor he had to pay for and avoiding cumbersome apprenticeship requirements. (Although Levitt didn't hire as much skilled labor, he paid his employees well, kept them working steadily, and even offered retirement benefits. In the end, many workers took home more than they would have working at union scale.)

Levitt worked through an extensive network of subcontractors, ushering in another revolution. He had 26 different operations and 60 superintendents who supervised subcontractors; the subcontractors were independent enterprises, usually former employees or foremen at job sites. As a result, Levitt's company didn't have to assume the overhead of supervising labor at the work site. Subcontractors, many of whom were on the site already and had strong incentives to produce quality products quickly and efficiently, had this responsibility.

"We are not builders," Levitt once said. "We are manufacturers. The only difference between Levitt and Sons and General Motors is that we channel labor and materials to a stationary outdoor assembly line instead of bringing them together inside a factory on a mobile line. Just like a factory, we turn out a new house every twenty-four minutes at peak production."

In the process, Levitt and other industrial-style housing builders, such as Fritz Burns in California and Andrew Higgs in New Orleans, transformed housing in America. What was once a custom market dominated by craft methods evolved into a large-scale industrial production process. America's working class benefited as a result.

Perhaps more important, Levitt gleefully sacrificed aesthetics for functionality and lower cost. The original Levitt house was a four-and-a-half-room Cape Cod. Rather than put money into architectural finesse, the Levitt house bent toward the practical, putting money into up-to-date stoves and refrigerators, a washing machine, venetian blinds, and an unfinished attic for future expansion. The 1950 model, for a bit more money, added choices of facade, a built-in television, and a carport. Levittown was a New Urbanist nightmare come true.

Design wasn't completely ignored. The Levittown ranch house, for instance, was partly based on Frank Lloyd Wright's design concepts: adopting an open interior, opening the front door into the kitchen, placing the fireplace in the center of the home, and putting the living room in the back of the house, with a picture window looking into the backyard. Such features were strong attractions for city dwellers more accustomed to apartments and dense urban settings. In 1950, 1.25 million houses were built in the United States, and

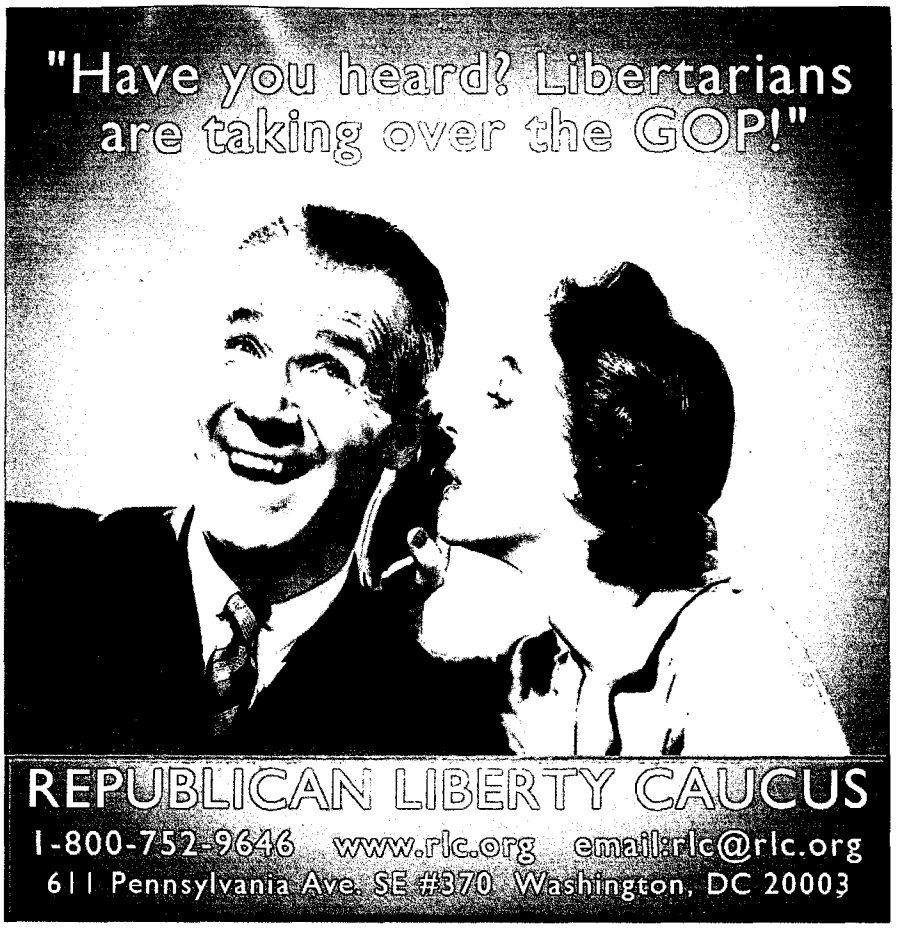
almost all of them were ranches.

Baxandall and Ewen are quick to note that Levitt lacked the mentality of the reformers who preceded him. He was an accidental revolutionary. Earlier experiments by "socially conscious" developers and planners had included community centers, libraries, meeting rooms, and movie theaters. Levittown had nine public swimming pools, seven commercial centers or "village greens," and several baseball fields. These were added not because Levitt was committed to civic culture, but because they were necessary to appeal to potential blue-collar customers, many of whom had never owned a house before. "Access to a swimming pool or a baseball diamond is as important a part of what a purchaser buys as solid walls or a strong roof," Levitt said, "because he's not just buying a house, he's buying a way of life." Public meeting places could—and did—come later.

The authors also criticize Levitt for not acknowledging certain forerunners—the pioneering experiments by nonprofit housing cooperatives, such as Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, completed in 1928; or such government-sponsored projects as Greenbelt, a planned town in Maryland. "Levitt's industrial methods," they lament, "elaborated the techniques pioneered in the 1930s although he never acknowledged his debt to public housing innovators."

Of course, the mere fact that these other experiments existed doesn't mean that Levitt was familiar with them or that he thought their designs were helpful. Many of the predecessor communities' features —interconnected pedestrian walkways, community centers, libraries, commercial buildings—may have tipped the scales against affordability and should properly be left to later periods as the community grows and evolves. (Regional recreational activities emerged in Levittown with the development of Roosevelt Field in 1956. It housed the first large-scale shopping mall, including a Macy's department store, an ice skating rink, and parking for 17,000 cars.)

Baxandall and Ewen's most intriguing contribution lies in their treatment of community. New suburbs like Levittown were "institutionless," they write, lacking churches, Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs,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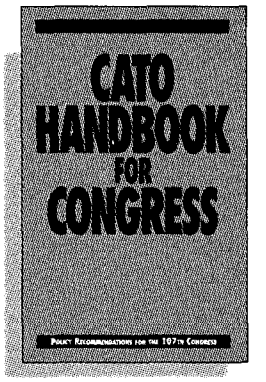

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chambers of commerce, local governments, and even parent-teacher associations. Within three years, Levittown's school "system went from a three-room schoolhouse to 14 schools with 12,000 students." Community-building was up to the residents, not to builders, architects, or urban designers.

Not surprisingly, when Levittown's civic institutions emerged, they were built primarily by women. The suburb's typical family included a stay-at-home mom and a husband who commuted to a job in the city. Levittown women were "home- and child-centered," but not passive. Most of their activity, in fact, was focused outside the home, organizing and arranging community life. "Most sociological and feminist literature portrays suburban women in coffee klatches gabbing about trivia," Baxandall and Ewen write, "but these women built a world for themselves, their children, and their community."

A lot of this community building started out small: informal baby-sitting arrangements, larger baby-sitting co-ops, Tupperware parties. It then evolved into more organized action, through political activity and the PTA. As in any town populated by real people, tensions and conflicts emerged. In contrast to the methodical, bottom-line approach of William Levitt and Sons, "Levittowners had strong and sometimes clashing ideas about what sort of place they wanted to live in, and they set about trying to make Levittown that place. What Levitt left unbuilt, people partially made up for by forging new bonds among themselves. The legacy of community building was carried on by women who were at first lost in this strong work, but who then remade it."

This account is a strong challenge to the views that now permeate American housing policy. Levittown is everything the New Urbanists despise: automobile-oriented, filled with cookie-cutter houses, devoid of large public edifices. Yet it survived, and it grew stronger over the decades. It came into being without institutions, but institutions soon emerged and grew, evolving as people moved in and made unique marks on the community. Some Levittowners waxed nostalgically about their old urban neighborhoods, but they didn't move back. For many, even Levittown's modestly priced housing meant a financial struggle, but they stayed, often for decades. The long commute was worth it for workers who wanted the flexibility and freedom of the automobile and a modest yard for their children to play in. The relative isolation of the suburban tract home was worth it for the mother who disliked the dense apartment living of the big city. Happy migrants built solid communities.

And it's residents who create communities, not architects or planners. Urban design can certainly facilitate community building, but it can't dictate it. By the time most citizens of Celebration move in—it is expected to fill up over the next decade—virtually all the original designers and administrators will be long gone, taking their copies of *Suburban Nation* and other New Urbanist texts with them. The physical infrastructure will be in place, but the real building will still lie ahead, as residents forge a civic culture from their intimate understanding of what still needs to be built. Levittown didn't start out as a "place worth caring about." It evolved into one.

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Two Men Who Would Be King

Bill Clinton vs. Elvis Presley vs. America

By Paul A. Cantor

In his latest book, Greil Marcus, one of the nation's preeminent critics of pop culture, deals with—among other things—a man whose life perfectly embodies the classic American success story. And yet that man's public recognition was shadowed by scandals in his private life, reminding us that moral corruption is a price men often pay for fame.

Marcus' primary subject acted out the standard tale of a pop culture celebrity. Coming from humble—even dubious—origins in the deep South, he rose to world prominence. Soon his face could be recognized all around the globe, and he began to think of himself as a kind of king. Surrounded by an entourage of sycophants and other sleazy hangers-on, he indulged in all the excesses modern fame makes available. He came to live in the kind of large mansion he could only dream about in his childhood, a place visited by tourists from all corners of the earth.

Gradually the figure who fascinates Marcus let his cravings get the better of him. He lost the youthful good looks that were in many ways responsible for his early success and ended up a bloated caricature of himself. He became the subject of vicious imitations on the stage and television; some entertainers even built careers around impersonating him. Eventually his private excesses eclipsed his public achievements. Even his loyal fans were forced to question whether he had squandered the talent evident in his youth.

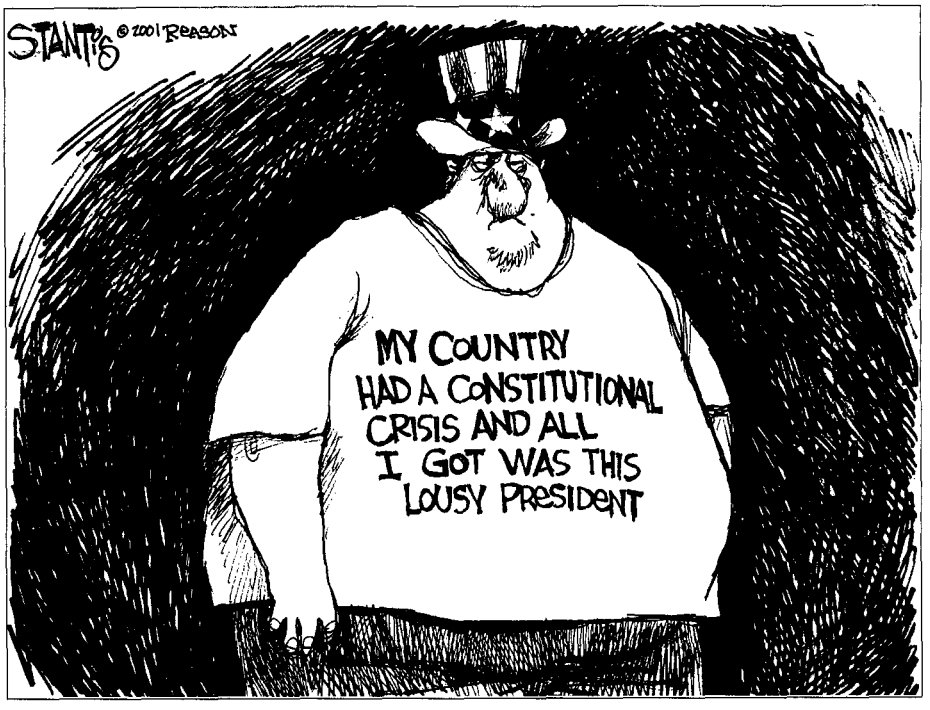
Double Trouble: Bill Clinton and Elvis Presley in a Land of No Alternatives, by Greil Marcus, New York: Henry Holt, 248 pages, $25

And yet, several times when people were ready to count him out, he staged remarkable comebacks—often repairing his damaged reputation with a single successful performance in front of the microphones, lights, and cameras. But parents often cringed when this man appeared on television. They did not want their impressionable children exposed to the moral decadence and in particular the uninhibited sexuality he came to represent. They kept hoping the cameras would shoot him from the waist up.

But enough about Bill Clinton. Marcus also discusses Elvis Presley in his new book, *Double Trouble.* I have placed a different spin on the comparison between

Presley and Clinton at the center of this book. Marcus is more sympathetic to Clinton than I am (exactly how much is hard to tell, but elementary mathematics dictates that any positive number is greater than zero). But even Marcus would have to admit that the juxtaposition inevitably works in Presley's favor.

Next to Clinton, Presley looks like a paragon of civic virtue (just compare their military records). And Marcus would surely agree that of the two, Presley has made the more lasting contribution to American culture. If people are still studying 20th-century American history a thousand years from now, perhaps some antiquarian rummaging through what Marcus likes to call the dustbin of history will come across this book, ponder its title, and wonder if this obscure Bill Clinton character happened to be president of the United States when the great Elvis was performing.



However future historians may sort out their judgments of Presley and Clinton, Marcus uses the two figures to plunge us into the 1990s and give us a feel for the decade's cultural politics and its politicized culture. Marcus has an acute eye for significant detail, and he's been one of the most perceptive commentators on the American scene for years. He begins his extended comparison with a simple fact: When Bill Clinton seemed hopelessly out of the presidential race in June 1992, he appeared on Arsenio Hall's television show and played the classic Elvis song "Heartbreak Hotel" on his saxophone.

For Marcus, this was the turning point in Clinton's campaign, the moment when he began to find a way to appeal to the American people, which eventually led to his victory over the exceedingly un-Elvis-like George H. Bush. Marcus goes on to explain the many parallels between Presley and Clinton and in the process explores America's fascination with its flawed icons, figures who manage paradoxically to embody both the hope of youthful idealism and the threat of moral corruption.

"As white male southerners without family money (hillbillies, no-counts, white trash—the source of course of much of the identification made between Bill Clinton and Elvis Presley, and of Clinton's own heartfelt or cynical identification of himself with Elvis)," writes Marcus, "Presley and Clinton always had to prove themselves—and they never could, not without abandoning themselves in some essential way, some way that one or the other or both could perhaps desire but never master.... Both Elvis Presley and Bill Clinton reaped all the rewards available in American society except one: moral citizenship....Our attraction to both is inseparable from our need to prove to ourselves that we are different from them—to prove that if we will never rise so high, we would never sink so low."

Double Trouble is a selection of Marcus' '90s journalism—chosen from his monthly column in *Interview* magazine, along with articles he wrote for such venues as *The New York Times, Die Zeit, Esquire,* and *Rolling Stone.* The most sustained piece in the volume, which neatly sums up his thesis, is the 20-page text of a talk called "The Last Laugh" he delivered as the keynote address at a conference on "Elvis: The State of his Art" at the University of Memphis in 1998. Some readers may at first have trouble seeing the connections between individual sections of the book and be put off by the way Marcus' argument appears to fragment. But in fact he orchestrates the book like a musician, turning what seem like abrupt transitions into subtle comments on cultural/political parallels.

The subtitle of Marcus' best and most ambitious book, *Lipstick Traces,* is "A Secret History of the 20th Century." In that 1989 volume, Marcus began with the phenomenon of the Sex Pistols and punk rock in general and went back to trace the obscure history of revolutionary utopian thinking in modern Europe and America, including such artistic movements as Dada and Surrealism. That is Marcus' great talent—he has a way of rooting around in cultural back alleys and backwaters, identifying seemingly minor trends that have larger implications for society as a whole.

As for *Double Trouble,* who but Marcus could have identified actor Bill Pullman as *the* face of American film in the 1990s? If you are having trouble placing Pullman, he is probably best known for playing the president in the 1996 hit movie *Independence Day.* If you still are having trouble placing Pullman, that is precisely Marcus' point. Pullman's face is not memorable; it embodies a lack of character, a kind of emptiness, a facelessness that was perfectly suited to the Clinton era, when the behavior of the real president led the media systematically to downplay character as an issue in public life. Though Marcus tries to defend Clinton whenever he can, he cannot help relating his presidency to an all-pervasive cynicism in American culture in the '90s.

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SCOTT STANTIS

Do What I Wilt

The individualist authoritarianism of Aleister Crowley

By Brian Doherty

The British author, mountain climber, and mystic Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) is long dead. But his afterlife as a pop icon continues. Crowley is beloved by subcultures ranging from heavy metal devotees (Ozzy Osbourne wrote a song about him, Jimmy Page bought his old house) to magicians (Crowley designed a popular Tarot deck, and wrote some of the more enduring modern instructional and philosophical manuals on ritual magic, or "magick" in his pet spelling).

He was the inspiration for W. Somerset Maugham's 1906 novel *The Magician* and has appeared, either as himself or in a loosely fictionalized disguise, in works by writers ranging from Anthony Powell to Robert Anton Wilson. He is one of the select figures on the cover of that founding document of the Aquarian Age, the Beatles' *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band.* More recently, he is the subject of the new biography, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (St. Martin's), by Lawrence Sutin.

Crowley was arguably the biggest star to arise from late Victorian England's fascination with the occult. His self-created reputation as the "wickedest man on Earth" guaranteed him inches of coverage in British newspapers and scandal sheets all through the first half of the 20th century. But his most enduring legacy is his oft-quoted statement of what Crowley called the Law of Thelema, Greek for *will*: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law/ Love is the law, love under will."

This credo is boldly libertarian, denying the authority of law to circumscribe individual freedom in any way. (To be sure, it lacks the usual proviso of "as long as you don't directly harm other people or their property.") Crowley thought that when the world finally heeded him, a new age would dawn, freed from the stifling, repressive bonds of ancient tyranny and Christian morality. While Crowley claimed his signature phrase was dictated to him via a disembodied entity called Aiwass, it can be traced back to both Rabelais (whose Abbey of Thelema in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* had a similar slogan) and St. Augustine (who wrote, "Love, and do what thou wilt").

Crowley in 1936.

How did this grandly liberatory notion play out politically for Crowley? Like many of his modernist contemporaries—T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis, to name a few—Crowley melded a taste for breaking from tradition in the name of individual expression with an equally enthusiastic admiration for authoritarianism. The modernists' flirtation with fascism had multiple sources, but its practical tenets can be roughly reduced to a combination of contempt for what they saw as grubby, stupid masses and an intense dislike for Jews.

Crowley, "the spoiled scion of a wealthy Victorian family" in Sutin's characterization, had the typical British aristocrat's disdain for what he thought of as inferior peoples—a group essentially consisting of all non-Brits (despite another of his resonant slogans, "Every man and every woman is a star"). In his dotage, Crowley even managed to convince himself that no less an avatar of human liberty

than Adolf Hitler had been inspired by his writings.

Crowley stumbled on a familiar barrier: He paid lip service to liberty while ultimately judging it merely an instrumental goal, a stepping stone to something more important—in his case, a proper playing out of one's uniquely appropriate True Will or, it often seemed, *his* True Will (the capitals are Crowley's own). Contrary to those who see him simply as a libertine, it wasn't just any old casual whim that should define the law to Crowley. This obsession with liberty as the instrument of True Will led Crowley to truly ridiculous conclusions.

Hence, the ostensible individualist once wrote that governments ought to appoint "experts to work out, when need arises, the details of the True Will of every individual, and even that of every corporate body whether social or commercial, while a judiciary will arise to determine the equity in the case of apparently conflicting claims." (This berserk, self-parodying vision of bureaucrats weighing and balancing spiritual fates in a Ministry of True Will is from Crowley's 1937 essay, "The Scientific Solution of the Problem of Government.")

Like many of his modernist contemporaries, Crowley melded a taste for individual expression with an enthusiastic admiration for fascism.

In *Do What Thou Wilt*, Lawrence Sutin sums up Crowley's contradictions, and his contributions, well: "[He] was at his best when pointing the way to diligent individual effort, and at his worst when purporting to govern his fellows and to forecast the course of history." This is true not only of Crowley, but of any would-be guru.

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In the kind of bizarre juxtaposition of which he is a master, Marcus compares Bob Dylan's *Time Out of Mind* (1997) to Pullman's film performances. Marcus writes, "The same cynical, damaged, sardonic, utterly certain acceptance of one's own nihilism has been all over Bill Pullman's face in the last few years, in *Malice*, *The Last Seduction*, *Lost Highway*, and especially in the recent *The End of Violence*—for just as *Time Out of Mind* is an end-of-the-American-century record, closing with a fantasy of a retreat to the Scottish highlands, to the border country where some of the oldest American ballads first came to life, Bill Pullman, in this last film, is the ultimate end-of-the-American-century man. His face has the cast of entitlement, an expectation of triumph and adventure, as the movie begins; like the narrator in *Time Out of Mind*, he knows soon enough that in some essential way the story he has to tell ended before he even took the stage, and that knowledge only increases his wariness."

This is Marcus at his best, both as a writer (he is a superb stylist) and as a cultural commentator. He is known mainly for his expertise on pop music (this book contains, for example, some brilliant pages on Kurt Cobain and Nirvana as the poster children for '90s nihilism). But I want to stress how shrewd his observations on American movies can be. The book includes a marvelous and in its own way moving retrospective on the film career of the character actor J.T. Walsh (though the term *lack-of-character actor* might be more apt in view of Marcus' analysis).

This essay builds up to another one of those revelatory moments when Marcus suddenly puts his finger on something in pop culture that mirrors larger political developments—this time an extended comparison between Walsh's fictional character in *Red Rock West* and the real Bill Clinton.

"Watching this odd, deadly scene in 1998," pens Marcus, "I thought of Bill Clinton again, as of course one never would have in 1992, when *Red Rock West* was released and Clinton was someone the country had yet to really meet. In the moment, looking back, seeing a face and a demeanor coming together out of bits and pieces of films made over the last dozen years, it was as if—in the blandness, the disarming charm, the inscrutability, the menace, the blondness, moving with big, careful gestures inside a haze of sincerity—Walsh had been playing Clinton all along. He wasn't, but the spirit of the times finds its own vessels, and, really, the feeling was far more queer: it was as if, all along, Bill Clinton had been playing J.T. Walsh."

It is at odd points like this—and not in the sections explicitly devoted to the president—that one gets a feel for the complexity of Marcus' response to Clinton. As a good Democrat—or perhaps more important, as a staunch anti-Republican—Marcus feels obliged to come to Clinton's defense against his critics. Try as he may, though, his heart is not really in it.

As a good Democrat, Greil Marcus feels obliged to defend Bill Clinton. But Marcus serves his own indictment on the president.

Indeed, it is only in a world where Marcus perceives no alternatives that he can muster up the energy to come down on Clinton's side. But by the time he is through weaving Bill Clinton into the cultural fabric of the 1990s, Marcus has served his own indictment on the president. He finds signs of corruption wherever he looks in the '90s. At best, one could say that Bill Clinton was just one more reflection of this spiritual rot, but at worst it seems reasonable to wonder whether he was one of its principal causes.

Though Marcus generally intends the parallels he draws between Presley and Clinton to flatter the president, in the end they mainly expose the degree to which his presidency was just an act and ultimately a hollow sham. Marcus leaves it to an unnamed Clinton speechwriter to deliver the obituary on his presidency. Talking to Marcus about Clinton's televised sax play-

ing, the speechwriter is blunt in his assessment: "That night on the Arsenio Hall show might have won him the election, but it ruined his presidency." In a sense, Marcus' book contains a useful warning to all politicians: He who lives by the television dies by the television.

Double Trouble can be recommended for its many insights into the 1990s, but I have reservations about some of Marcus' intellectual preconceptions. His work grows out of the Frankfurt School of Marxism, and his intellectual heroes are Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. Interest in pop culture does not lead Marcus to celebrate the power of free markets to stimulate artistic creativity, as it does, for example, Tyler Cowen in his *In Praise of Commercial Culture.* On the contrary, in the manner of Benjamin or Adorno, Marcus views capitalism as the enemy of "authentic" culture. He complains about what Marxists call the commodification of culture under capitalism, a process which he feels reached a peak in the 1990s.

"The audience," says Marcus, "has been organized, or organized itself, into market segments—complex and recombined segments of age, race, class, and gender—efficiently predictable, containable markets that can be sold identity, or anyway self-recognition, packaged as music." With his words "has been organized, or organized itself" Marcus glosses over an all-important distinction. If capitalism somehow organizes the pop culture audience into segments, then it may be the sinister enemy of artistic expression. But if the audience organizes itself, then isn't capitalism simply responding to what people spontaneously desire? What is wrong with that?

Still, Marcus does have a point when he complains about the way Elvis has been packaged as a cultural product by the American music industry. "It's strange," he writes, "if Elvis Presley sang, looked, and moved like nobody else, which he did, why are all the memories the same? But it is not strange. The reduction of memory to a few infinitely repeatable and exchangeable words is nothing more or less than the result that obtains when people are caught in a loop of pure capitalism—where, within a certain society, a certain market, a certain frame of reference, everything on sale sells everything else. And this process can proceed only if history and fantasy are both excluded."

One can acknowledge along with Marcus the ways in which the music business, with its endless Elvis repackagings, has trivialized Presley's genuine achievements, but one must at the same time wonder if those achievements would have been possible in the first place in the absence of the American market economy and the resources it put at Presley's disposal. (See the excellent chapter "From Bach to the Beatles" in Cowen's book, which deals with music as a business and hence with the cultural vitality of capitalism.)

Though I often disagree with what Marcus says, his ideas are always thought-provoking and I learned a great deal from reading this book, especially about pop culture phenomena I had never even heard of before. I may not run out and buy a CD of the band Pere Ubu, but I am glad to know that a group with that evocative name exists. Greil Marcus offers a model of how to write about pop culture intelligently (and, I might add, elegantly). In his ability to identify phenomena that are significant and worth pondering, he has few equals.

Paul Cantor (pac2j@virginia.edu) is a professor of English at the University of Virginia. His book Gilligan Unbound: Pop Culture in the Age of Globalization *will be published by Rowen & Littlefield in 2001.*

The Poet As Politician

The ideological odyssey of W.B. Yeats

By Michael Valdez Moses

In December 1923, William Butler Yeats, the first Irish writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, seized upon the occasion of his lecture to the Royal Academy of Sweden to present his literary career in political terms. Noting with irony that an English committee had almost certainly forwarded his nomination to the academy, Yeats cast himself as a standard-bearer of Irish nationalism and a champion of Ireland's cultural independence.

"The theatres of Dublin," he recounted in his speech on "The Irish Dramatic Movement," "were empty buildings hired by the English travelling companies, and we wanted Irish plays and Irish players. When we thought of these plays we thought of everything that was romantic and poetical, because the nationalism we had called up—the nationalism every generation had called up in moments of discouragement—was romantic and poetical."

Yeats had reason to regard himself as a political figure of national, even international, importance. He was at the time of this address a senator of the newly established Irish Parliament. Moreover, he spoke not long after the conclusion of a violent guerrilla war waged by the Irish Republican Army against British imperial rule in Ireland and a subsequent civil war, fought between the newly formed army of the Irish Free State and a breakaway wing of IRA irregulars, over the terms of the peace treaty that concluded the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–21. While Yeats could not boast of having fought in the streets against the British, he nonetheless used the occasion of his literary success to claim, retrospectively, a leading role in the na-

The Life of W.B. Yeats, by Terence Brown, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 384 pages, $39.50

W.B. Yeats: A Life: The Apprentice Mage, 1865–1914, by R.F. Foster, New York: Oxford University Press, 672 pages, $21.50

Yeats's Ghosts: The Secret Life of W.B. Yeats, by Brenda Maddox, New York: HarperPerennial, 496 pages, $16

tional campaign that led to Irish independence in 1922.

One of the many splendid qualities of Terence Brown's recent biography, *The Life of W.B. Yeats*, is its critical appreciation of the poet's extraordinary cultural accomplishments within the broader context of a brilliantly rendered political and social history of modern Ireland. Brown's Yeats is the consummate late romantic and modernist artist, arguably the greatest lyric poet to write in English in the 20th century and one of the most innovative playwrights of his age. (The magnitude of Yeats' poetic achievement has tended to overshadow his accomplishments as a dramatist. More's the pity. He was quite possibly the most original avant-garde Irish dramatist before Beckett.) Brown, Professor of Modern English Literature in Trinity College, Dublin, is by no means the only biographer of late to take on the life of W.B. Yeats. While neither as comprehensive nor as authoritative as Roy Foster's projected two-volume *W.B. Yeats: A Life*, the first installment of which has appeared, nor as salacious as Brenda Maddox's recent *Yeats's Ghosts: The Secret Life of W.B. Yeats*, Brown's book is nonetheless the finest single-volume biography of the Irish poet since the publication of Richard Ellmann's seminal *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* in 1948.

If the Yeats that Brown portrays is every inch the literary titan, he is also a man of unusual personal complexity immersed in the political, cultural, and religious controversies of the day, a figure who, despite his own occasional championing of *l'art pour l'art*, struggled to imbue his poems, plays, essays, and stories with political and religious, even cosmic, significance. In the course of a poetic career that stretched from the 1880s to the late 1930s, Yeats adopted many different political masks, including those of radical nationalist, classical liberal, reactionary conservative, and millenarian nihilist. Brown's biography offers us the chance to revisit an era in which the range of political options and ideas was considerably wider than in our own day. If the poetic appeal of extremist politics was more palpable, Brown's book and Yeats' life remind us that grave risks attend the heightened drama and aesthetic appeal of an illiberal era. If we sometimes lament the colorlessness of our modern politicians, whose programs and ideologies are as predictable as their neckwear, we might nonetheless be grateful that in our day no genius in the throes of divine madness lights our way to paradise.

In his *Autobiographies*, Yeats recalled an Anglo-Irish Protestant childhood set against the backdrop of Fenian (Irish nationalist) violence and the "outrages" of the Land War, agrarian agitations aimed at reforming the neo-feudal system of land tenure in Ireland. Yeats was born in Dublin in 1865, but his earliest memories are of London, and even they are haunted by the specter of violence. In one recollection, a servant warns him that the town will be

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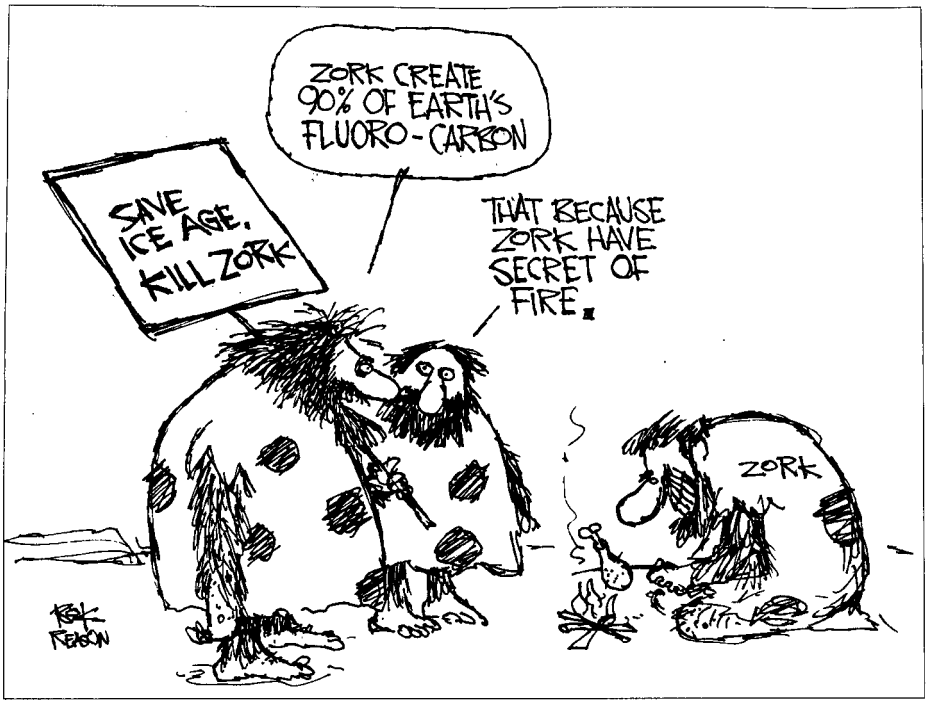

blown up, and he thereafter "goes to sleep in terror." His earliest recorded memory of the power of poetry harks back to his boyhood days in Ireland and concerns a (presumably Catholic) stable boy who introduces the future Nobel laureate to a book of "Orange rhymes," that is, a popular book of anti-Catholic and anti-Fenian political verse. Yeats recalls that shortly after his first exposure to poetry he was told of "a rumor of a Fenian rising, that rifles had been served out to the Orangemen; and presently, when I began to dream of my future life, I thought I would like to die fighting the Fenians."

But as a young man Yeats would reject the typically pro-British and pro-Unionist views of most Anglo-Irish Protestants and come to share the ardent nationalism of the Fenians. He counted among his closest friends and mentors the nationalist hero John O'Leary, who had been sentenced by the British to 20 years' penal servitude in 1865 for treason against the Crown. Some time after 1885, when he was 20 years old, Yeats himself joined the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood (a descendent of the Fenian Brotherhood of the late 1860s and a predecessor of the IRA). Yeats' participation in an organization pledged to the violent overthrow of British rule in Ireland cannot be dismissed as a passing youthful indiscretion. Brown suggests that Yeats maintained contact with the banned organization as late as 1900, when a few of the more ardent Irish nationalists actively fought for the Boers against the British in South Africa.

Yeats' dreamy pre-Raphaelite poetry of the late 1880s and early 1890s, with its penchant for orientalist fantasy and Celtic mysticism, may seem innocent of political content. But for the young Yeats, who was self-consciously promoting himself to an English readership as an *Irish* poet, art was politics by other means.

Like so many other participants in the cultural revolution known as the "Irish Revival," Yeats believed that with the political collapse in 1891 of Charles Stewart Parnell (the leader of the Irish Party in the British Parliament and champion of Irish Home Rule), the ground on which the cause of Irish independence would be fought had shifted from the parliamentary to the cultural arena. By 1895, when Yeats had established himself as one of the leading Irish poets of his generation, he had already helped to found the Irish Literary Society of London and the National Literary Society in Dublin.

As the names of these organizations suggest, Yeats was pursuing in an active and public manner the cultural ideal of an independent Irish nation. Nor was this all. Yeats was deeply involved throughout his life in various occult, mystical, and magical pursuits, which included membership in the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. But even these occult interests could assume a political valence. In the mid-1890s Yeats, along with Maud Gonne, the woman for whom he yearned and rhapsodized for much of his adult life, hoped to establish a "Celtic Order of Mysteries" in a "Castle of the Heroes," located on an island in Lough Key in Country Roscommon. Yeats' aim, according to Brown, was to "infuse Irish reality, through symbolic rites and ritual enactments, with an ancient spirituality in which paganism and heterodox Christianity combined would help Ireland achieve a transcendent liberation from the crassly materialist world of England's commercial empire."

By 1902 Yeats had joined with other literary figures to establish first the Irish Literary Theatre and then the Irish National Theatre Society (later the Abbey Theater). The 1902 premiere of *Cathleen ni Houlihan,* co-authored by Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory, celebrated and memorialized the 1798 rebellion of the United Irishmen against British imperial rule. It proved a popular and critical success, even among such Irish Catholic nationalists as Arthur Griffith, editor of the *United Irishman* and founder of Sinn Fein, who otherwise resented Yeats for what he regarded as the poet's misrepresentation of the political aspirations and cultural values of Gaelic Ireland's Catholic population.

Yeats' nationalism, like his politics more generally, was never orthodox, no matter how ardently pursued. As behooves a poet, would-be prophet, sometime magus, and political visionary, Yeats had the utmost difficulty adhering to any party line. He intended his brand of cultural nationalism to be an all-inclusive, big-tent movement that would welcome "Protestant and Catholic, Nationalist and Unionist, Parnellite and anti-Parnellite." Nevertheless, by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Yeats had alienated not only most Protestants, who favored Ireland's remaining within the United Kingdom, but also the great majority of Irish nationalists, who envisioned an independent nation founded upon the twin pillars of Irish Catholicism and Gaelic culture. To his cultural antagonists and political en-

emies, the most famous Irish poet of the century was simply *not Irish enough.*

Yet "Easter, 1916," written in the aftermath of the unsuccessful nationalist uprising in Dublin against British rule, is arguably the most famous poem on the subject of Irish politics. Contrasting the gray conformist city of middle-class Dublin before the rebellion with the new world of heroic possibility ushered in by the guerrilla fighters and martyrs of Easter week, Yeats sounds out the names of the new Irish immortals: "I write it out in a verse—/ MacDonagh and MacBride/And Connolly and Pearse/Now and in time to be,/Wherever green is worn,/Are changed, changed utterly:/A terrible beauty is born."

Much to his subsequent embarrassment, Yeats had spent Easter week of 1916 not in Dublin but visiting the estate of Sir William Rothenstein in Gloucestershire, England. Yeats, like the vast majority of the Irish population, had been less than enthusiastic about the uprising, believing it to have been quixotic, careless of civilian lives, and perhaps even unnecessary. But Yeats quickly revised his view in the wake of the execution of the rebel leaders by semi-secret British court-martial.

In "Easter, 1916" he succeeded in casting himself as the bard who memorialized the Irish dead (many of whom were personal friends and acquaintances). Though physically absent on the days of reckoning, Yeats, through a poetic act of will, had in effect become *the* voice of Ireland, the militant prophet who named the founding fathers of the new nation.

Ever since 1965, when Conor Cruise O'Brien savaged Yeats for his apparent fascist sympathies, Yeats' political views have come in for much unfavorable scrutiny. Despite an early friendship with William Morris and his lifelong devotion to Maud Gonne, both of whom embraced one form or another of socialism, Yeats detested all forms of communism and Marxism. But like his younger friend and fellow poet, Ezra Pound, Yeats was nevertheless a frequent and vocal critic of what he regarded as the crass materialism of the modern era. Notwithstanding his own entrepreneurial talents and ultimate financial success, Yeats often conceived of Ireland as an anti-materialist haven for premodern spiritual values. Moreover, Yeats was both by temperament and by ideological affiliation a great skeptic of pure democracy. In short, there is much to be said for the thesis that Yeats was a "radical" conservative, a reactionary critic of modern democracy, and a retrograde champion of the values of the old order. It is therefore all the more curious and surprising that Yeats' senatorial career should exemplify the ideals of classical liberalism.

Against the immediate historical background of a guerrilla war against British rule and the subsequent violence of the Irish Civil War, Sen. Yeats articulated a remarkably capacious, nonsectarian, and culturally heterogeneous concept of the new Irish nation. While he supported government funding of several cultural and scholarly enterprises dear to the interests of artists and intellectuals, Sen. Yeats was nevertheless wary of the powers of the newly created national Irish government.

Yeats opposed what he regarded as the gratuitous or imprudent use of the Gaelic language for official government purposes. He objected, for example, to the mandatory and exclusive use of Gaelic on street signs and on railroad tickets as a mere cultural pretense, or worse, "an attempt to force Irish on those who do not want it." Yeats opposed such linguistic forms of social engineering on practical grounds—the most important thing was for the overwhelmingly English-speaking population to be able to read the name of their destination on a ticket or for them to know with confidence where it was safe to cross a railway line. To institute a more ambitious scheme was to court a backlash against "all Irish thought, all Irish feeling, and all Irish propaganda." The latter sentiment was to prove prophetic.

Yeats seemed especially nervous that the new government might use its power to create a homogenous (and implicitly servile) citizenry. Critics of Yeats' politics have pointed to his growing enthusiasm in the 1920s for Mussolini's Italy. Yeats did indeed speak approvingly in the Senate and the press of Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, the Italian minister of education. Nevertheless, in his speeches on the Irish educational system, Yeats worried that inferior compulsory public education might prove worse than no schooling. While admiring the Italian educational system, Yeats spoke out against the American and Japanese forms of public schooling on the grounds that they subordinated the good of the individual child to the good of the nation.

Never a systematic or rigorously coherent theorist, Yeats turned a blind eye to the totalitarian political foundation on which the Italian school system was built. Improbably, he persuaded himself that Gentile's philosophy was an elaboration of the thought of Burke and Berkeley, and that the Italian model offered a practical and holistic approach to education consistent with religious freedom and the cultivation of the individual soul.

Yeats' devotion to the rights and liberties of the individual stemmed in no small measure from his belonging to an increasingly beleaguered and vulnerable minority in the Free State: Irish Protestants. It is no accident that Sen. Yeats spoke eloquently and with conviction on behalf of what he hoped Ireland would become: "a modern, tolerant, liberal nation." In the course of his senatorial career, Yeats raised

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Stan Brakhage's Dog Star Man Show

A legendary experimental filmmaker turns up on cable TV.

By Jesse Walker

If you were channel surfing on November 17, 2000, you might have stumbled on a strange succession of images, edited at unfamiliar rhythms: the surface of the sun, the interior of the body, a man climbing a mountain to chop down a tree. You would have been watching *Dog Star Man* (1964), a much-revered but little-seen experimental film by the prolific director Stan Brakhage, being broadcast as part of the Sundance Channel's month-long salute to non-narrative filmmaking.

For half a century, Brakhage has made movies that alienate some audiences, transfix others, and leave others wobbling from one state to the other. Today, faced with climbing costs, he rarely uses film to photograph, instead painting and scratching directly onto celluloid. This comes, paradoxically, at a time when moviemaking is increasingly cheap for those who work with video and digital technologies. Another paradox: Though few theaters screen Brakhage and other experimental filmmakers today, their work is increasingly available on videotape, information about it is easily found online, and a commercial cable channel is willing to air it in prime time.

Brakhage lives in Boulder, where he teaches at the University of Colorado. I spoke with him in late November.

Q: Until recently, you wouldn't even license your work to be on videotape. Now it's on television.

A: I still don't care for video that much, but then I'm fortunate to have films to look at. So I'm spoiled, like someone who lives in a city with lots of museums who can see all the original oil paintings and watercolors. Video is getting good enough that it isn't fair for me to withhold [my work] from people who have no other way to see it.

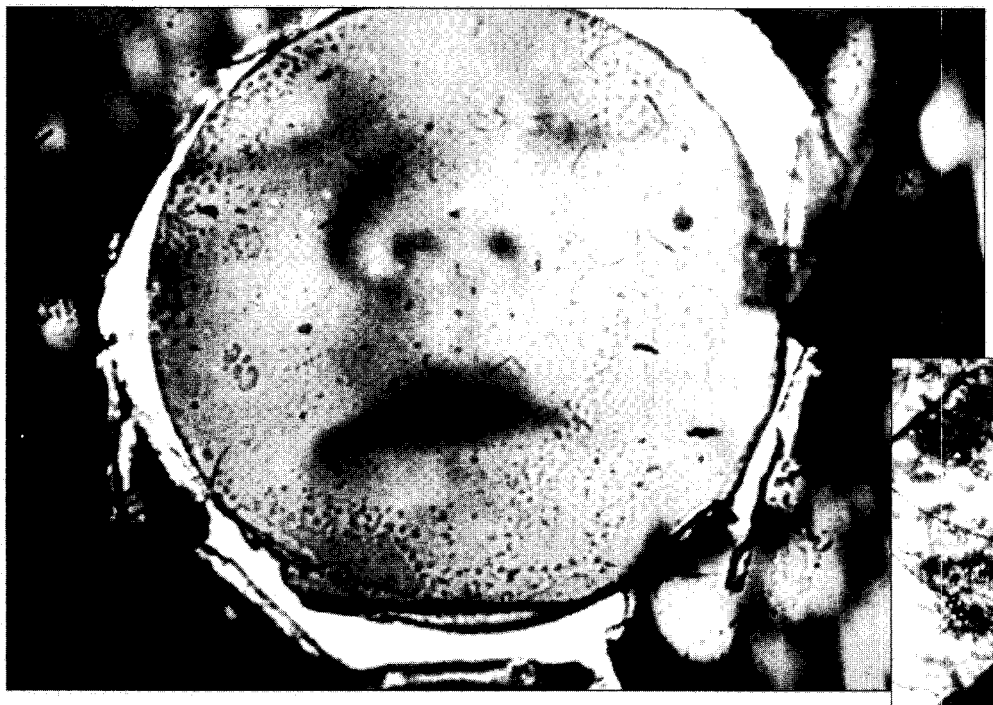
Q: With your kind of filmmaking getting more difficult and other forms of filmmaking becoming easier, is the art at large getting better or worse?

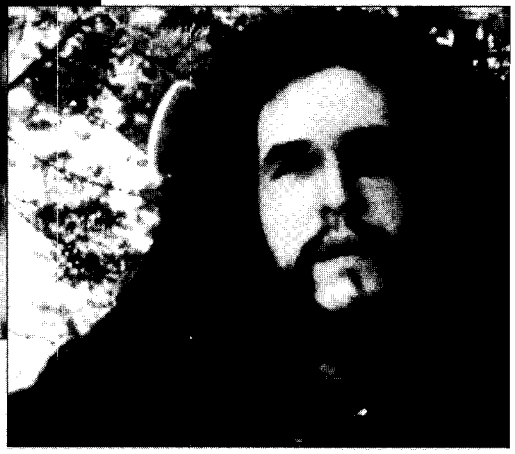
A: It's been my experience that if you can survive your greatest weaknesses and work despite them, there's an enormous strength that occurs. There was a time when film was relatively cheap and grants were easy to come by. I'm talking about the '50s, the '60s—you could live off people's garbage. There was a great surplus of goods.

There came to be excesses, just as now there is in video. One can pick up a video camera and run it any which way, it's so inexpensive—if you don't like it, just erase it. Whereas if you bring home a box of film, it's like a bag of jewels. So there comes to be a deep caring. There's many more people devoted to film as an art now than there were in the '60s, when it was at its height.

Q: It sounds like there's more experimental filmmakers and a smaller audience for their films.

A: Yes. I often wonder what happened to those thousands of people who would gather to sit for hours listening to great poets read poetry. It's not just film—





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Scenes from *Dog Star Man*

I think all the arts have lost all but a very facile, short-term interest.

Q: On the other hand, there's now a commercial TV channel willing to show the films of Stan Brakhage and Ken Jacobs and Maya Deren in prime time.

A: This is the first time that this has happened. This movement never was presented by educational television, with a few isolated exceptions in certain towns.

Q: There's also the phenomenon of commercials and music videos that have absorbed some of what experimental filmmakers have done.

A: The main people who rented our work in the '50s were commercial filmmaking companies. They'd rent them, steal some ideas and grammar, and sell something.

I myself made a living in companies that made commercials. When somebody takes something from a film of mine and puts out a stupid thing selling something that's no good, I feel the same way I felt when I was hired to do some stupid commercial for some product that seemed worthless. I would walk off the job and get myself fired.

The other side of the coin is when I see something that I appreciate, not as an art but as a wonderful entertainment, or when I see something advertised that seems to be a worthy thing for people to have, and they use my effects. I remain just completely delighted by *Superman* [1978], for example. They rented *The Text of Light* a number of times, and they made Superman's cradle out of it, and the place where he goes to renew his strength. I thought it was a really good movie, the children all enjoyed it, we had a wonderful time, and they certainly made good use of effects I had created.

Q: Have you had that experience watching an advertisement?

A: I don't know if they got it directly from my work, but I was the first to use the interruptive flash frame as a psychological effect. It's in a film called *Cat's Cradle.*

You've often had single frames used to create fake lightning—single frames of white staggered in a rhythm that was lightning-like. But no one that I know of before myself used a single frame of a previous image so that, fleetingly, you get a kind of memory. Then Gregory Markopoulos did it in *Twice a Man;* and then *The Pawnbroker* came out, with Rod Steiger, which used it quite extensively. This is a clear case of grammar coming directly out of independent filmmaking, through Gregory and myself, to Hollywood and then to advertisers.

Q: You had a role in *Cannibal: The Musical,* made by [*South Park* creators] Trey Parker and Matt Stone.

A: They were students of ours, and they wanted professors to take cameo roles. I do that for students all the time. The hardest part for me was that I don't like to go up into the mountains anymore. I suffered from the mountains for years and years, contrary to most people's belief that I'm the archetypal mountain-man filmmaker.

For half a century, Brakhage has made movies that alienate some audiences, transfix others, and leave others wobbling from one state to the other.

Q: They've seen *Dog Star Man* too many times.

A: Yeah. Look at that poor fool falling down—it's a wonder I didn't kill myself with that axe. I think one reason I'm such a good photographer of mountain scenery is that I'm not sentimental about it at all. I come with a deep fear, a great deal of respect, and some outright hatred for these landscapes.

But I like those guys. I think *South Park: The Movie* was a great musical—Trey is a marvelous composer. We do quite different things, but they have respect for me. They put on this counter-festival at Sundance, and they showed hours and hours of my work. ◆

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objections to increasing the powers of the constabulary to enter homes without warrant; opposed efforts to bar unaccompanied adolescents from attending the cinema; spoke in favor of official inspections of Irish prisons to ensure that political detainees were being humanely treated; sought to ensure that the Irish judiciary was shielded from the political influence of the executive branch; defended the rights of women to enter the civil service; consistently denounced all attempts to erode what we in America would call the separation of church and state; and vigorously supported copyright legislation designed to protect the property rights of artists, scholars, and writers.

In general, Yeats favored the free exchange of intellectual and artistic products across national borders. With the exception of his support for measures designed to shield the fledgling Irish stained glass industry from foreign competition, Yeats inclined toward a doctrine of free trade—especially when it involved forms of international cultural exchange.

Most famously, Yeats spoke with great passion against an early attempt to abolish divorce in Ireland. Yeats' ringing and at times caustic rhetoric in defense of the rights of the Protestant minority constitutes his most memorable speech in the Senate: "I think it is tragic that within three years of this country gaining its independence we should be discussing a measure which a minority of this nation considers to be grossly oppressive. I am proud to consider myself a typical man of that minority. We against whom you have done this thing are no petty people. We are one of the great stocks of Europe. We are the people of Burke; we are the people of Grattan; we are the people of Swift, the people of Emmet, the people of Parnell. We have created the most of the modern literature of this country. We have created the best of its political intelligence....If we have not lost our stamina then your victory will be brief, and your defeat final, and when it comes this nation may be transformed."

Alas, Yeats' rhetoric only served to inflame sectarian passions and failed to persuade his fellow senators. It is a pity, because elsewhere in his speech Yeats articulates a powerful and more broadly

appealing reason to reject the proposed measure: It will make less likely the unification of the south and north of Ireland.

Yeats' defense of what he elsewhere referred to as "the liberty of minorities" and his excoriation of "fanaticism" reveal the liberal basis for his conception of Irish nationalism. Though his rhetoric may well have inflamed rather than dampened sectarian passions at the time, Yeats nonetheless articulated a principle of toleration, liberty, and the protection of religious and political rights that would make possible the unification of a diverse and culturally heterogeneous Irish people.

Brown gives rather little attention to Yeats' career in the Senate, but dutifully attends to Yeats' fascination with Italian fascism and his nearly lifelong hostility toward mass democratic politics. He draws attention, for example, to Yeats' brief enthusiasm in 1932 for Gen. Eoin O'Duffy's notorious, if short-lived, "Blueshirts," a paramilitary organization of Irish ex-servicemen that assumed fascist trappings. In fairness to his subject, Brown also notes that in 1929 Yeats took the trouble in print to warn his friend Ezra Pound against his enthusiasm for Italian fascism. Moreover, Brown suggests that in 1924 Yeats may well have played a small role in heading off a military coup d'etat against the fledging Irish Free State.

Brown argues that Yeats' infatuation with the Blueshirts grew out of the poet's "boredom with bourgeois democratic politics" and his "relish for drama, vitality, the heroic, the irrational, passion." Brown observes, however, that Yeats' very resistance to conformity and his love for agonistic struggle would almost certainly have soon made him an outlaw in any truly authoritarian regime.

For Brown, Yeats' poetic imagination was fueled by two countervailing psychic forces: a passion for drama, conflict, and heroic resistance on the one hand, and a profound fear of disorder and the breakdown of civility and custom on the other. Brown thus characterizes Yeats' peculiar crisscrossing of the political terrain of the '20s and '30s as an instance of his "instinctive libertarianism" at war with his "rage for order."

But it's also possible that Yeats' growing interest in fascist politics and eugenics in the 1930s stemmed not so much from an internal division in his character as from the external political developments of the day. Yeats seems to have become disillusioned by what he understood to be the increasing divergence of liberal and democratic principles in Irish political life.

While Brown suggests that Yeats was relatively untroubled by Eamon de Valera's election as prime minister in 1932, I would argue that the poet interpreted de Valera's victory as a sign that Ireland was on the road to an illiberal, albeit democratic, future. Offering a populist and nationalist vision of a rural, Catholic, and Gaelic Ireland, de Valera pursued a policy of cultural and economic protectionism that deepened the Irish economic malaise of the 1930s. As government interference with markets and morals increased, and economic and personal freedoms came under assault, emigration rose at an alarming rate. Though he never expatriated himself, as did such other writers as Joyce, Beckett, and O'Casey, Yeats in his later years spent much of his time nursing body and spirit beyond the confines of his native land.

In the course of his poetic career, Yeats adopted many different political masks, including those of radical nationalist, classical liberal, reactionary conservative, and millenarian nihilist.

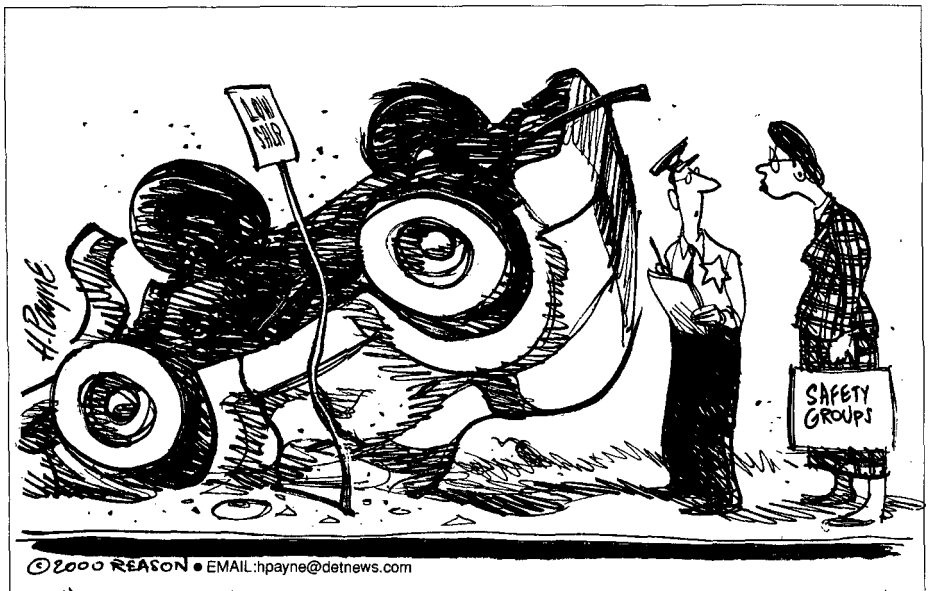
Even in the late '20s, well before de Valera's election, there were unmistakable signs that a resurgent Catholic majority was prepared to curtail liberties that had been long granted to the Irish population. In 1923 the Irish Parliament passed the Censorship of Films Act, which stipulated that no film could be shown in Ireland without first having obtained a certificate of approval from an official government film censor. Five years later, just as Yeats was retiring from the Senate, a critical and far-reaching Censorship of Publications Act was brought before the Irish Parliament. The bill, which became law in 1929, empowered the Irish government to examine and approve all books and periodicals published or sold in Ireland.

The law granted the government explicit authority to censor materials deemed to be "indecent," which was construed as "calculated to excite sexual passions or to suggest or incite to sexual immorality or in any other way to corrupt or deprave." Even if a work was not judged indecent, it could be banned if it were found to "be injurious or detrimental to or subversive of public morality." Provisions of the act effectively outlawed the advertisement of all forms of birth control. Assisted by the efforts of zealous customs officials, the Censorship Board banned or censored some 1,200 books and 140 periodicals in the 1930s alone. Those in violation of the law were subject to severe penalties, including fines, seizure of property, and imprisonment.

Such far-reaching curtailments of the traditional rights of free speech and free press were no doubt fueled by an increasingly powerful Irish cultural chauvinism; such acts in practice created an embargo on many "foreign" cultural commodities. As Yeats was well aware, these policies, while generally popular with the Irish Catholic majority, in effect discriminated against the tastes, cultural values, and religious practices and beliefs of a dwindling Protestant minority.

Yeats' anxieties concerning the looming threat of majoritarian despotism thus seem to have been well-founded, even prescient. The prospect of an illiberal Irish democracy may well have tempted Yeats, in turn, to take a more extreme and increasingly reactionary view of political and cultural matters in Ireland. It is worth considering that Yeats' political hopes were never founded on the conviction that democracy was the best guarantee of "a modern, tolerant, liberal nation."

Yeats found himself in the uncomfortable position of many political liberals in the 1920s and '30s. Despite the positive connotations of "democracy," the rise of



"SHE WOULD'VE SURVIVED THE FLIP CAUSED BY THE TIRE-TREAD SEPARATION... IF THE AIR BAG YOU MANDATED HADN'T DEPLOYED."

mass political movements during the era by no means heralded the advancement of liberal political goals. Italian fascism, German Nazism, and Russian communism were, we should remember, mass movements that depended for their early success upon a broad base of democratic support. In Ireland, the populist (or at any rate popular) political movement of the day was far more humane and more respectful of the liberal tradition than the right- or left-wing mass movements to be found elsewhere in Europe.

Nonetheless, for Yeats, the power of a majority to effectively curtail even some of the rights and liberties long cherished by an increasingly vulnerable minority was disheartening and disturbing. In Brown's view, "the true foe" for Yeats "was neither of the two great political movements in conflict in continental Europe [fascism and communism], but obscurantist Catholicism, which in the name of democracy suppressed free thought" and "stirred up in him moods of frenzied prejudice against the common herd that have nothing benign about them." In this sense, Yeats' late and disturbing affinity for retrograde politics might well have marked not the fruition of his liberalism but rather the frustration of his liberal aspirations.

Of course, the interplay between the artistic imagination and political engagement is notoriously unpredictable. It is a disturbing paradox that several of Yeats' most inspired lyrics and plays emerged out of the political disillusionment and nihilism of his last years. Few 20th-century poems can rival the bitterness and poignancy of the declining poet's "The Circus Animals' Desertion," with its stark concluding lines: "Now that my ladder's gone/I must lie down where all the ladders start/ In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart."

Even fewer modern plays can rival the sublimity and tragic power of *Purgatory*, which stages the fatal confrontation of a disillusioned old man and his callous young son, a vagabond couple adrift amidst the ruins of a haunted Irish landscape. In a work that anticipates the minimalism of Beckett's drama, Yeats envisions a world in which the dead are more alive than the living, and in which all are condemned to repeat endlessly the purgatorial cycles of a malignant political history.

If we seek a redemptive political lesson from these late works, it might be the singular consolation that a distinguishing virtue of a liberal society is its capacity to accommodate the most demonic of muses.

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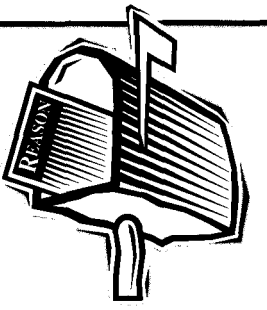

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Puzzling Over Poe

This scramble of symbols, attributed by Edgar Allan Poe to one "W.B. Tyler" and offered to the readers of *Graham's Magazine* in 1841, remained impenetrable for 160 years. Last year, however, it was posted on the Web by Poe scholar Shawn Rosenheim and was soon cracked by a software engineer in Canada (who won a $2,500 prize for his effort). But for some, the answer is a greater mystery than was the puzzle. Perhaps they are searching for solution in the absence of mystery.

Poe specialists believe that "Tyler" is really Poe, and some have hoped that the puzzle would yield a deep message from the author, or at least an insight into the man. What the code says, they think, is just schlock. "It was early spring," the passage begins, "warm and sultry glowed the afternoon." It goes on to describe a stiff scene of lovers at a window. "Why pick this dopey thing" to encode, Rosenheim wondered to the press.

Why? Because Poe's ratiocinative work—his mysteries as much as his puzzles—is about the pleasure of solution, of thinking methodically for its own sake. In contrast, literary canon-making and the construction of genius is an effort in mystification. But if one wants a mystified Poe, one will have to be content with Baudelaire. Much as he may have invented his own biography, Poe refuses to let his solutions become mysteries.

"No, no, dear Charles," softly says the puzzle's woman at the text's end, "much rather you'ld I have a little sun than no air at all."

—Charles Paul Freund

To Edgar A. Poe, Esq.

Dr Tik OGXEW PjqFyʌ NqUH ⊥IA VQSMGŏ
xDTbjs SNB EsVLNKƸYŏ ſCP TΛol HꟻZGUƆƆ
LꟻIKſf ЯP NQDŏL ʌMO hjFXIKIRFKIRꟻ gXHyWE3 Ta
QJ3TBXPeE yGMdUd ꓤA SꟻAΛ8 nvZ TCGDYRƆ
DHB ʎFKxDGf ZƆNSMEꟻL ЯK ORI OJNI zŏh Mfg
wƆVieGXHB ʌwiL NKn AFKsO iyBſDV bƎƎsfsgFƎƎ ⊥PLF
SPZl CEWNSW bGeRꟻh aNjmx sƎʌTHyVA8 ʎakiXDIx
MƸ ſCd JƎIK oFŏART NQOTY ʞcr ORI dJTBGP
SEB DNBLŏu Lpн Nſnjʌ atƸƸ diky MVO cEpiwXVʌ
sXJZ eIf kMk xYKSSG HꟻitVW QƸP qTꟻƆ DƎYj RVV
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RZnK CꟻƎ xL Wix JDMNVIUFQx GDHƳBRI
bzNL LBTdh FW eETOYdk ⊥IA VIRŏMFTV
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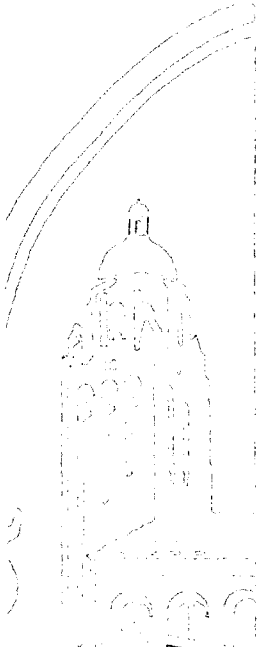
Environmental Protection, in Name Only

Henry I. Miller is a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution and the author of *To America's Health: A Proposal to Reform the Food and Drug Administration.*



Federal regulations costing Americans approximately 700 billion dollars annually seem as inevitable as death and taxes. All regulations, however, are not created equal. Some are reasonably cost-effective and serve society well; others are so wrongheaded and expensive that they are actually detrimental to society.

Regulation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been criticized for being inefficient and unscientific. When the Office of Management and Budget analyzed the cost-effectiveness of a panoply of regulations throughout the federal government, of the thirty least cost-effective regulations on the list, seventeen had been imposed by the EPA. This impression of inefficiency is reinforced in an analysis by Washington, D.C., based Resources for the Future (RFF) of eight major EPA regulatory programs of the past two decades. RFF concluded that the science behind the policy often gets distorted or ignored: "EPA for a variety of reasons is unwilling, unable, and unequipped to address and acknowledge the uncertainties in the underlying science."

The courts have often had to rein in or educate EPA officials. In May 1999, for example, a federal court ruled that the EPA's new air-quality standards were arbitrary and capricious and had to be revised. In May 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to rule on whether the EPA's policy of deliberately disregarding the cost of its regulations is required by the Clean Air Act. A public policy research institution and forty prominent economists argued persuasively in an amicus brief that the EPA should "consider explicitly the full consequences" of regulatory decisions, including costs, benefits, and any other pertinent facts.

Perhaps the most systematically egregious EPA policies have been those applied to biotechnology. The agency has been consistently at odds with scientific consensus about biotechnology's risk, choosing to focus on the most precise and predictable techniques of biotechnology while ignoring genuinely hazardous products. These policies have been a drag on innovation of products that are particularly environmentally friendly. Under the Toxic Substances Control Act, for example, the EPA focuses regulation on gene splicing—the most precise technique of the new biotechnology—an approach that has halted research into microorganisms engineered to clean up oil spills and toxic wastes.

EPA regulations have also inhibited research on new plant varieties that require fewer applications and lesser amounts of agricultural chemicals. The agency requires the testing *as pesticides* of gene-spliced crop and garden plants that have been modified for enhanced pest and disease resistance. This policy imposes extensive and expensive regulatory requirements on field tests of gene-spliced cotton plants that have increased resistance to insects, for example, but exempts plants with virtually identical traits that were engineered by cruder, less-predictable hybridization techniques. The scientific community has repeatedly condemned the EPA's approach.

Many of the EPA's regulatory programs are unscientific and afford little or no protection to human health or the environment. They have unacceptable costs and divert resources from other legitimate endeavors. They breed well-deserved cynicism about the government's motives. Often, the only environment that benefits is that of the bureaucrats themselves.

— Henry I. Miller

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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